



Exciting Adventures

ARGOSY

JAN. 4

WEEKLY

Texas Shall Be Free

H. BEDFORD-JONES' *Story of Sam Houston*

Stories by

Detzer—Lawton—Carse

Tuttle—Bruce

and others



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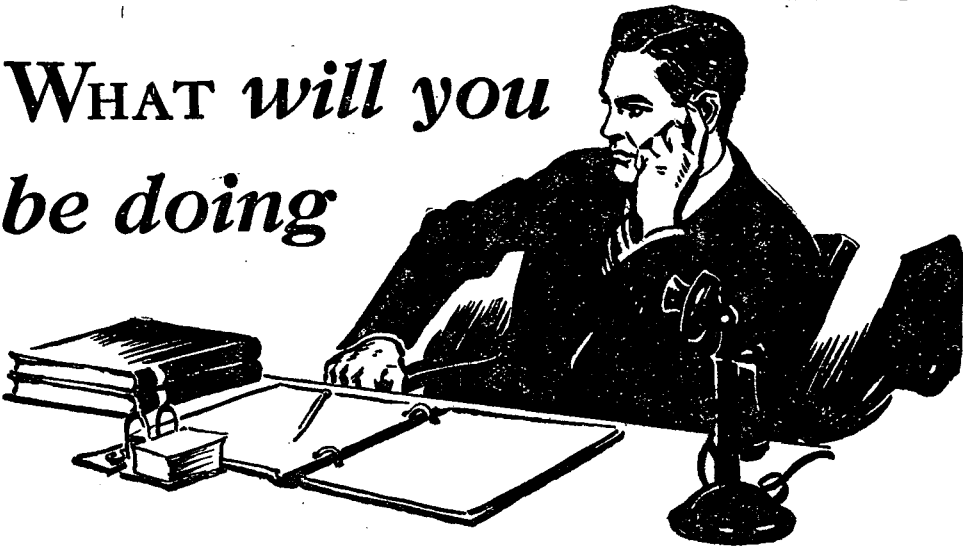
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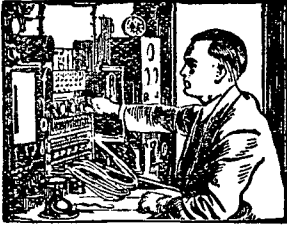
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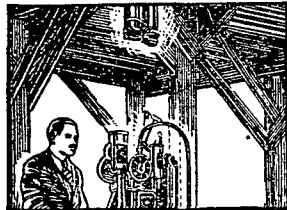
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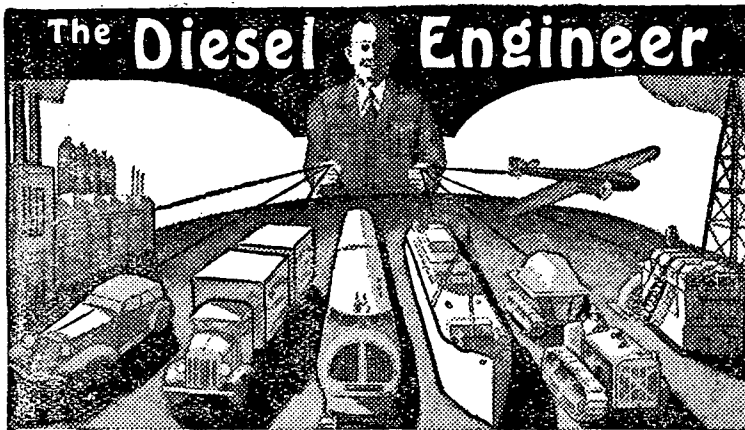
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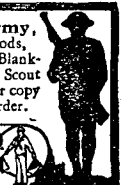
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Texas Shall Be Free!

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Author of "Bowie Knife," "Riley Dillon, Masquerader," etc.



"You, hombre! Come here!"

Gordon Durant had two missions in Texas—to carry a message to the defenders of the Alamo — and to kill his brother!

CHAPTER I.

A MEXICAN DIES.

HERE now was a man whom it might be ill to cross.

That darkly weathered countenance gave warning. The wide-set,

sombrous black eyes, seeing all and telling naught; the nose, a very prow with which to cleave danger and difficulties; large straight mouth, supported by a squared chin, itself supported by a bronzed, sinewy neck not easily bent. A strangely powerful face for so meanly garbed a figure!

As Gordon Durant bared his head to the dawn air, his black hair showed



Durant arose obediently

curly and close. His figure was erect, lean of waist and thigh, girted about the middle with a leather belt for his sheathed knife. Yet he wore high-peaked straw sombrero, loose faded blue cotton shirt, trousers of like material, and scuffed old brogans. Afoot and thus clad like any peon, he had come ninety miles in three days and nights. Durant of Tennessee, now afoot in the Texas chaparral, and not

the only Durant to be braving destiny in these uncertain parts and days of 1836.

He had followed a trail which here dipped into the arroyo. A fitful flow of water, residue of the late rains, gathered in pools. A little farther up the main traveled San Antonio-Goliad road crossed the arroyo by a rude bridge of poles and timbers, which had become undermined at one end so that it was sunk aslant.

The road, such as it was, approximated the north-south course of the

San Antonio River, indicated to the westward by a crooked line of green. Durant was headed north for San Antonio, where Travis of the regulars and Bowie of the volunteers held the old Alamo mission against the thousands of Santa Anna's Mexicans. Alone, he had come from Goliad, where Fannin of the Texas Volunteers and four hundred men held the old mission fort of La Bahia. Bitter word he bore to Travis and Bowie—word that Fannin's march to relieve them had failed, word that Mexican armies had spread over the whole southern part of Texas in a rolling flood designed to stamp out the rebellion of these upstart Americans.

Straight of quick foot like an Indian, Durant climbed the cut-bank of the arroyo. Beside a scrubby mesquite, he stared toward the north, where San Antonio and its adjacent Alamo blended at this distance into one spot of peaceful green nurtured by flowing waters. What of his destination?

The horizon, brightening in sunrise glow, was scarcely broken. There was hint of a tower or two, but the morning air hung breathless to his ear as he listened. There was no shuddering vibration of gunfire. Was this the peaceful calm of truce, of victory or defeat, or of sheer weariness? A faint haze seemed to hover above the city. Smoke of battle, still lingering? Valley fog, shrinking before the signals of the sun? Durant shrugged. Whatever awaited him, he was going in. It was his job. Travis must get that bitter message, so he might retire before he was overwhelmed.

Durant turned to swing into the trail—then froze.

A horseman was coming; an officer. The trail, that led into the highway north of the sunken bridge, was open to view, the whole road was open, the

country was of desert bareness. There was no hiding, no evasion. Durant had played this game over ninety miles of enemy country. Now he relaxed, composedly seated himself beside the mesquite scrub, and under the mushroom sombrero awaited developments. Drooping eyelids veiled those sharp, alert black eyes of his.

A captain, this officer. And coming from the south like himself. Bound for San Antonio de Bejar, like himself.

THE Mexican was cloaked and booted, his filigreed red képi gleaming like a beacon. He jingled down into the arroyo and eased bridle at the pool. He was swart, mustachioed, soldierly; his eyes flashed to the rim of the arroyo and the man sitting there. Leaving his horse to suck greedily at the pool, he dismounted, took the bridle reins in his left hand, and with his right whipped a pistol from its saddle holster.

"You, *hombre!*" he rapped out. "Come here."

Durant obediently rose and descended into the arroyo again, crossing the stream. His attitude was admirable. He slouched as he walked. A vacuous expression came into his features. He removed his sombrero and ducked his head as he faced the officer.

"Your name, fellow?"

"*Señor*, I am Diego Lopez."

"What are you doing here?"

"I saw your honor coming and waited for you to be first with the pool."

"So? Where are you going?"

"I am from Bejar, *señor*. I am going to join my family at Refugio, below La Bahia, which is known as Goliad."

"You are!" exclaimed the officer.

"Then you can tell me how things go in Bejar. I have dispatches for the President, General Santa Anna. The accursed rebels have been whipped out of the Alamo?"

Durant shrugged.

"On the contrary, *señor*, the rebels have been reënforced. They are intent upon recapturing the city; they hold all the roads. I myself got out with difficulty. I would advise your honor to let me guide you in, after dark, by a roundabout path."

The swart face scowled sternly.

"Indeed! And how am I to believe such a story? For Refugio, eh? Then you have papers vouching for your character, authorizing you to travel."

"I am only a peon, *señor*," protested Durant. "My papers are a good pair of legs. No more is required."

The space between the two men had narrowed. Durant stood deferential but firm, as the officer advanced closer to him.

"Now I know you're lying. You've no pass to leave Bejar. It's impossible that the rebels should have rallied against five thousand soldiers with cannon. Understand, I am of General Urrea's staff; we have had couriers from Bejar. I think you're a deserter, you rascal. You'll not guide me into Bejar, my man; I'll do the guiding, and take you there at once. Hold out your hands; let me search you."

With a murmur of humble assent, Durant let his sombrero drop, extended his arms, and snuffed. He drew back his right hand to wipe his nose.

SUDDENLY the dull animal flashed into life. Left hand seized the pistol barrel. Right hand drove down its edge to the Mexican's forearm. He tore the pistol from the numbed grip, and with one savage leap

swung the brass-bound butt against the temple of the officer. It was all done in a single burst of muscular action.

The blow sounded hollow. With a moan, like a gust of dismay at death's beck, the Mexican staggered. He fell over sideways and lay extended, head thrown back and eyes rolling up; then the lids fluttered and were still. The blue bruise upon his temple became suffused with blood.

"The devil!" Durant bent above him for an instant, then straightened and shrugged. "Too hard. Can't be helped now."

He fell rapidly to work, knowing exactly what he was to do. Time, place and circumstance favored him. He stripped the limp and lifeless body of its uniform and tossed off his own humble garb. Swiftly he donned breeches, jacket, boots, cap and cloak, belted himself with the saber. The uniform might have been made to his order; anyway, he thus ordered it.

After its first start, the horse stood complacent, fetlock-deep in the cooling water. Durant turned to the saddle, slashed off a thong, and on this hung his sheathed knife safely inside his shirt. Then he glanced at the body, and frowned on the arroyo. No brush here, but plenty by the sunken bridge.

He bundled his own sorry garments into the basket of his sombrero, then stooped and with significant ease shouldered the limp weight of the dead man. He trudged up the arroyo; the horse, pricking its ears and sniffing, followed like a dog.

The bridge was sharply tilted. Screened for half its length by tumbled poles and brush, it provided a handy cache. Durant, bowed with his burden and picking his steps carefully, was nearly there. He was already figuring on where to pitch his load for best dis-

posal, when a cool, amused voice checked him in startled dismay.

"*Viva Dios!* Very well done, my captain! Permit me to assist in the last rites."

From the shadows of the collapsed bridge-end a man sauntered forth, with thin-lipped smile and gleam of wide, horsey teeth. Evidently, he had been all the while sitting under the bridge in close covert.

Durant, still burdened, stood staring.

A lithe, tawny fellow, this, of features round and small, eyes full but hard, nose blunted for flaring nostrils. Feline, alert, dangerous, this face. The man wore costume of bravo or caballero, either one; silver-tasseled wool sombrero, white linen shirt, black velvet jacket with tinsel braid, black velvet trousers slashed with yellow, and a yellow sash. Durant caught the outline of a knife. Over arm was a musketoon. From about the bridge-end came the sudden nicker of a horse.

"Surprised, my captain?" The fellow grinned with clenched teeth, like the snarl of a hyena. "You've burden enough on your soul without saddling your shoulders too. Come, we'll chuck him in. Legs to me, arms to you—"

And leaning his musketoon against a sapling, he took hold and helped ease the burden. With a swing together, they pitched the body up under the bridge, followed it with the sombrero and clothes. Then Durant, grimly amused, eyed his companion inquiringly and met a knowing, leering wink.

"LET the rats say the requiem mass," and the fellow dusted his hands. "We're well met, my good captain. I wasn't sure, at first, it was you. You look more like yourself in that uniform. Whether it's safe or not is for you to say."

Durant's brows lifted. "So you know me, do you?"

The other laughed, and made a curious, swift sign—a circle of thumb and forefinger.

"Do I know you! But I name no names. You're going into Bejar?"

"Unless you aim to stop me."

"The saints forbid! You carry dispatches and are ahead of the news. This dead man won't talk for a day or two. You should have no difficulty with the gold."

"Eh?" Durant frowned, startled. "The gold?"

The fellow tapped his chest, then wiped his throat with quick finger.

"You have three days; El Tuerto waits that long for you to come with the ten thousand yellow boys. Meantime, now that we've picked up your trail you won't escape us again, so play the game and all's well."

All Greek to Durant, but he was far from admitting it. Ten thousand in gold struck at the roots of things. El Tuerto—the One-eyed! And recognition by this cutthroat rascal—why, that could mean only one thing! Durant quivered in every nerve. His nostrils flared, as with a dog on the scent.

"For whom do you take me?" he demanded bluntly, hopefully.

"For another dead man, if you play false." The thin lips drew back in a snarl. "Why this nonsense? Are you for the gold or not?"

"Of course," said Durant slowly.

"Spoken like a brother, my captain. You really hurt my feelings. We've sat together at monte, and you're none the poorer for it; not to mention that slight affair with the *señorita*—eh?" The rascal grinned. "But we understand each other; no more tricks with Jacopo, I beg of you! I'll arrange all with

El Tuerto. Good journey to you, and safe return. To the hilt, brother!"

Again he made the sign of the circle and turned away, but Durant halted him.

"A moment, Jacopo! Are you heading toward Bejar?"

"Away from it, as you well know."

"Well, what's the news there? What of the fighting?"

"All over. You'll smell it when you are there." Jacopo picked up his musketoon. "No Tejanos to bother you; the road's clear. The nearest are at Gonzales, where Santa Anna will gobble them and their general—what's his name? Houston. I hear they declare for independence. *Muy bien!* In war it is the vultures who fatten. Of course I may think you a fool for going into Bejar in uniform—but that's your affair."

Durant's gaze clouded. He wanted to ask more questions, yet dared not chance them. The fighting over? No matter; he must make sure. He had private word for Travis, too.

"By the way," and Jacopo gestured toward the bridge, "the gentleman you killed was Captain Leon de la Vega; well thought of, by all accounts. Naturally I have no eyes nor tongue—but don't delay too long with the gold or I might sprout some. *Adios*, brother of the blade!"

"*Adios*," said Durant.

Jacopo crossed under the bridge, to where he must have a horse. Durant mounted the animal of the officer and rode down to the trail and out of the arroyo, heading on for the main road and San Antonio de Bejar.

THE sun was topping the level horizon on his right, flooding all Texas with light. Durant heartily wished that it might illumine the foggy

angles in his brain, where fancy groped. However, he had facts enough to busy his wits. Hailed as a "brother of the blade" by a jaunty cutthroat, recognized as a friend and companion, engaged to deliver ten thousand in gold to El Tuerto—no sun was needed to illumine this mystery!

An outlaw clan, of course; freebooters, bandoleros of a sworn company, a brotherhood vowed to loot and to the knife. They might be outlaws from the Gulf coast, deserters from the army, of any and every nation.

"And Jacopo knows me well, eh?" Durant smiled slightly. A mirthless, bitter smile. "That means my information is correct. If he took me for Vincent, then Vincent's in Bejar, and I'll get him. Ten thousand? There is not that much gold in all Texas! It's like that damned Vincent to be in with such a gang. And I thought he was in the Mexican army! So much the better. Gives me more freedom. No message for Travis now, unless I can smuggle Fannin's letter to him. He'll be in jail, I suppose. So much the better for me—find Vincent and kill him, the dirty dog!"

The one purpose rose uppermost in his mind again, where it had lain guiding him these past weeks and months.

The Alamo had surrendered, then; the quiet brooding over the landscape ahead was explained. Smell it? What did that mean? No matter. Better be thinking about himself and his own chances now.

Should he have retained his countryman guise? Diego Lopez might merge with the common herd, unobserved, once inside the town; but now it was no longer a question of getting into the Alamo unseen. An officer with dispatches would be passed without

question, and could find Vincent the more readily. But to pose as a staff officer, as Captain de la Vega, who might be well known—hm! Not so good.

Ahead, off the highway, showed the half ruined walls of a mission. Durant reined aside, gained the seclusion of the old walls, and dismounted. He began to examine the contents of his saddle bags.

Traveler's miscellany, a dispatch portfolio; nothing else. No name stamped anywhere. No name in the cap or in the cloak; a few coins in the pockets, a purse as well, but still no name. Good! No papers save a letter to Captain de la Vega, which Durant tore to fragments. Saber and saddle boots—all were clear. But what of the dispatches?

A single letter, fat but sealed, addressed to His Excellency Don Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Durant felt his scalp twitching at the name. It had traveled far, this name. Its challenge had brought Davy Crockett and others to the Alamo; had raised the muster from Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and New Orleans who were at Goliad under Colonel Fannin. Durant felt curious to see this Santa Anna, arch-foe of republican liberty.

But the letter—would it mention the bearer and possibly condemn him as a spy? Durant carefully moistened with his tongue the red wafer sealing the paper together. He wet his knife blade and slipped it through the composition. Presently it came free; no wax seal, luckily! He scanned the slanting script with its flourishes, and the signature of General José Urrea. Dated at headquarters, San Patricio, those forty miles from Goliad. No memorandum, no mention anywhere of Captain de la Vega.

SATISFIED, Durant produced a packet of lucifers from the tunic pocket, and after a moment the heated seal was stuck fast again. He mounted and swung out into the highway again. Time had passed, but it was well worth while. He was secure now, his mind was at ease. His Spanish was fluent, his wits were quick. The long trail was ended, the search was done. Here in San Antonio de Bejar, the damned Vincent would pay for his dastardly act in New Orleans. Then would be time enough to seek out Faith and explain to her. Until then, nose on trail, hand to knife!

"It was like the clever scoundrel to come north with Santa Anna; perhaps he knew I was in Mexico on his trail," reflected Gordon Durant. "Well—attention! There's Bejar."

Touched now by the sun and with clearing details, the city was close. That should be the Alamo, opposite it on the east. By the dust, cavalry or troops must be moving about in the open. The haze, like smoke from spent fires, rested high above the green trees and drab walls, and buzzards circled with exploring eye. The birds of war, to whom all glory is reduced in carrion. No flag appeared over the Alamo.

Country folks were abroad upon the road, and to either side. They respectfully made way for the officer, saluting him with doffed hats as he passed.

Thus Durant passed toward Bejar.

It was the second week of March, 1836.

In Goliad, nearly a hundred miles south, James Fannin and his four hundred men were tempting fate, with General Urrea waiting to close in upon them from San Patricio. Urrea had blood-red bayonets, for he had slaughtered most of Grant's command. Beyond Gonzales in the east, over seventy

miles away, Sam Houston was hastening in upon forlorn hope to rally succor for the Alamo, and the new Texas Republic had been proclaimed. In San Antonio the dictator president of Mexico, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, was preparing his five thousand choice troops to sweep the rebellious provinces with fire and no quarter.

Durant, like all outlying Texas, was ignorant of local events, for news was slow to spread. He was spurred by private hatred, private vengeance of the utmost; and if he had some reasonable doubts as to the consequences, he admitted them not nor cared.

So he looked bold-eyed at the horseman now bearing down upon him ahead, smartly cantering but holding his mount in hand as though bound upon a journey. A lieutenant of dragoons, who reined in and saluted brightly.

"*Buenos dias*, captain—God and Liberty! Lieutenant Barras, with dispatches for the south. You are from San Patricio, perhaps?"

"Yes, with dispatches for His Excellency."

"And you came through without difficulty?"

Durant laughed as he assented, and could breathe more easily.

"And you?" he asked curiously. "I thought there was fighting here?"

The youngster stared at him broadly, then comprehended.

"Of course—you could not know—I'm the first out with the word. Yes, all was well settled here. *Dios!* What a hell it was!" He sobered momentarily, then tightened rein. "I must be on. I trust you bring His Excellency good news, for you'll find him in bad humor."

"After victory? How is that?"

"The cursed Alamo cost him five hundred men and more. *Adios!*" With wave of hand, the lieutenant rode on.

"Five hundred—whew!" Durant whistled softly. "Why, Travis had only a hundred and eighty all told!"

He went his way, until destiny overtook him with scurvy hand.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW NAPOLEON.

THE city lay close ahead. To right and left crowded green irrigated fields, high trees, farmsteads. Durant had heard the clatter of hooves to rear, but he did not turn to look as uneasy conscience might bid.

He waited until the moment was ripe and glanced aside, to see a *ranchero* upon a long-legged mule. The mule, blown and rebellious, readily yielded to the rein, slackening pace to match that of the horse. The rider was a small wizened man wearing a huge hat and enormous spurs. He uttered breathless, excited salutation.

"God and Liberty! You are for Bejar, *señor*?"

"If I am, then what?" Durant parried.

"I would ride in with you," the other panted. "It is a military matter. You're an officer. You can be of great help to me."

Durant's pulses failed for an instant. He knew what was coming, guessed it.

"What is the matter you mention?"

"A dead man, *señor*. There is a body under the Arroyo Hondo bridge, back some miles on this very road," the other wheezed. "Murder has been done, *señor!* I'm going into Bejar to report it."

"You saw the body?" demanded Durant sternly.

"I did indeed," and the *ranchero* hastily crossed himself, with a slight shiver. "I have a small *ranchito*, *señor*. I left early to look for some cows that had strayed. Owing to the state of the country, this old mule is the only saddle animal I have left. When I rode into the arroyo I happened to look about under the bridge and saw a terrible thing. A corpse tucked away, *señor*! Not long dead; the flies and rats had not found it. But the head was bloody, and the body was stripped. Near by was a bundle of common clothes. I think someone traded clothes with the dead man. So I left word at my house, and here I am."

"Very bad, certainly," commented Durant. "But why do you say a military matter?"

"It is so." The little man wiped sweat from his eyes. "I go not to the *alcalde* but to the camp. The murdered man was an officer in the army; I even know his name, for I have seen him before. He has stopped at my house. He is known hereabouts. A great *caballero*, not a Mexican but a *caballero* of Spain."

Durant swallowed hard. His quick, hard eyes found no guile in the little rancher.

"And you wish to go into the city with me, then?"

"But yes, if you will permit. You will know how to take me to His Excellency, the general and president, the great soldier, Santa Anna! I am a poor man and have need of the reward. His Excellency will be generous after his great victory here. The dead man was Captain Leon de la Vega. Perhaps you, *señor*, knew him?"

"I have heard the name," Durant said. "Come along, then."

There was no way out of it, no way to shake off this fellow who was like

a burr. What a devilish stroke of luck! Durant could not let him get into Bejar first, with his news for the authorities; nor could he prevent his getting there, for the road was open, the mule had legs, the man had definite aim.

"It is for His Excellency in person," insisted the little man. "A thousand thanks to you, *señor*! You may be rewarded too—who knows?"

Durant gave moody ear to the prattle, inwardly cursing the rancher. This greedy fellow running with his news promised to sharpen the eyes of all Bejar for strangers in uniform.

THEY were coming into the city by the Goliad road from the southeast; thus the old Alamo lay fair to the right. Durant eyed it as Colonel Fannin had described the place to him. A large walled yard, a two-story chapel, upon a rise of the plain across the river from the town. The plain was a humming camp arrayed in careless security.

The road took on the aspect of an outflung street. There would be a ford or bridge at the river; a beaten road cut across northward, as though for the Alamo.

"*Viva!* A noble sight, this city!" bleated the rancher. "One would not think such a battle had just taken place. And where do we find His Excellency, *señor*?"

Durant drew rein, and the mule halted at his stirrup.

"Listen, *mi amigo*," he said confidentially. "One does not see El Presidente at the drop of a hat, without arrangement. If he's occupied we might have to cool our heels for some time. And I have important business for his immediate attention, since I bear urgent dispatches. Have you anywhere in the town you can remain?"

"But certainly, *señor*. The house of my cousin, Don Angel Prieto."

Durant nodded. He had the game in hand now. All he needed was half an hour.

"Good. Then keep on across the river here, where there'll be no soldiers to question you. Breathe not a word of what you know to any soul here, or the news will be stale before you reach His Excellency. Meantime, I'll arrange with him to receive you as soon as possible."

"You'll tell no one?"

"Trust me for that!" and Durant laughed. "I'd gain nothing, for I found no body. And I've my own affairs to look after. Tell me where to send for you."

"Yes; I'll be waiting," the little man eagerly replied. "The name is Pedro Ortiz, at the house of Angel Prieto in Santa Maria Street."

"And mind, keep your mouth shut, or the civil authorities will be after you for concealing a crime!" Durant cautioned him. "You must await the pleasure of His Excellency. I'll send for you."

"Agreed, *señor*, and a thousand thanks!"

Full of importance, Pedro Ortiz jabbed his mule and hurried along.

Durant turned into the beaten road trending north, with the river and city to his left. No delivering those dispatches now; that was needless risk, with this bleating rascal ready to spill word of murder. No, he must seek a tavern or wine-shop, merge with other men in uniform, lose himself and his identity for another less risky. Any place would do, where he might lie perdu until darkness fell. He needed sleep, also. He could well sleep the day away.

And with darkness—nose to trail,

hand to knife! The mocking laughter of Vincent beckoned him on, and his black eyes hardened on the road.

This forked—one way for town, across a bridge, and the other way to the Alamo. And here at the fork, unexpectedly, half a dozen soldiers came slouching out of the shade to block his way, with a trim young officer in spruce command. An outpost guard, stationed here to examine incomers. Again Durant stifled a curse and drew rein, his eyes probing sharply.

"YOU are from the outside, *señor*?" said the officer politely.

"Your name and business, if you please. Orders."

Boldness was the only answer. Durant spoke with quick authority.

"From General Urrea, with dispatches for His Excellency in the city. Let me pass, *señor*."

"Impossible, captain; a thousand apologies," and the officer smiled. "It is necessary that you first report to General Filisola, second in command. Those are my orders for all dispatch bearers. The general is quartered at the Alamo. I'll escort you to him myself, with your permission."

The only answer lay in soldierly obedience. Durant forced down his chagrin; things were not going to his taste, but could not be helped. After all, he could deliver his dispatches, make the best of matters, then disappear in the city.

The officer mounted and rode beside him, chatting agreeably. Durant's attention, however, was fixed upon the fortress and its approaches. Fire and shot and shell had been at work here. The plain was scarred, walls had been blazed with lead and iron, cannon embrasures were blackened by powder fumes, parapets were chipped and

crumbled. The chapel rose gaunt and ragged, its window openings mutely staring as though blanked by horror. Soldiers were toiling to repair damages.

A peculiar scent, acrid, rank, as of charred and smoldering rubbish, pervaded the air. Durant recollected the words of Jacopo: "You'll smell it when you're there." A queer sensation seized upon him, a hesitancy to ask questions. The officer noticed his manner, and made light comment.

"I see you're interested; it is natural. Your first view of the ground? *Dios!* You should have been here on the day itself!"

"The place was taken by assault, then? I see the soldiers clearing away ladders."

"Bah! Those devils made short work of men and ladders. We had to enter by a breach choked with our own dead. Three times we tried, and then—" The officer spread out his hands significantly. "I need say no more. Victory, to sweeten breakfast!"

"So they surrendered, eh?" said Durant.

The other blinked at him. "What's that? I forget; you just arrived. They were rebels in arms, they refused to surrender at discretion—why, damn it, they set out to shoot everybody within range! So we carried no terms except ball and bayonet, when we finally went in. They resisted until the last man went down."

"The devil!" Durant exclaimed. He was slow to comprehend what was told him, what was implied. "You mean that few prisoners were taken? But some of them must have escaped or fled?"

The other laughed harshly.

"Not one, caballero; not one! Their souls are all roasting in hell, as

as their bodies roasted here. You see, when the affair was over, His Excellency directed an auto-da-fé for the carcasses as an expression of contempt. They made three piles of wood and flesh. You can see one of the ash-heaps yonder. *Cáspita!*" The officer wrinkled his nose. "I'll never get the stench out of my nostrils. The taint seems to linger in the air, in the trees, in the very ground itself."

Gusts of horror beat at Durant's brain. He could find no words for utterance.

For a moment of imagination the plain erupted a dragon's-teeth crop of bayonets moving forward in serried ranks. The Alamo was veiled in battle smoke rent by cannon gushes and rifle spurts. Travis, Bowie, Crockett and the others; all ashes now. Cold rage, infinite compassion, glorying pride of blood, fought each other within Durant's mind and clogged his tongue. Momentarily he forgot even Vincent and the driving power that had fetched him here.

THEY entered the Alamo inclosure. The yard interior was still littered with bursts of iron, pitted with shell holes. Walls were splashed with rusty red. Durant was aware of men and officers, of gold braid, of eager tongues, yet could see nothing except that vision of brave men dead and burned. Then a word pierced to him.

"General Don Vicente Filisola! Dispatches for His Excellency, my general."

Vicente! The name was all too familiar; fortune seemed to be playing a game upon the word. Here before his clearing gaze was not the Vincent he knew, not the Vincent of a day past and a day to come, not Vincent Durant at all. General Vicente Filisola was

plainly enough an Italian. Darkly olive with black side-whiskers, a mat of closely curling hair, intelligent, glowing eyes. Aides and messengers around him, the escort officer waiting at attention. Durant came out of the saddle and saluted.

A moment of sharp scrutiny was broken by a sudden smile, an extended hand.

"That is good. You are from—"

"General Urrea, sir."

"Your name?" queried the general.

Durant was awake now, alive to danger, swift to impromptu decision.

"Captain Ramon Segura, sir."

"Of the Tampico Battalion, I see."

Confound the man, how did he see?

"You will kindly deliver your dispatches to me; they'll be forwarded at once. His Excellency will receive you in person as soon as possible, I'm sure."

"The dispatches are here in my saddle bags—"

"No. Wait, *señor*—"

Filisola made a sharp gesture and leaned aside; an aide was whispering at his ear. His brows lifted in astonishment; his eyes dwelt again upon Durant.

"Impossible!" ejaculated the general under his breath. Then he stroked his whiskers, as the aide stepped back.

Tension gripped Durant suddenly. What was wrong? The warning chill clutched at him. If aught had gone amiss, he was now a lost man; no boldness, no swift stroke, could extricate him. Then the brow of Filisola cleared and he spoke again, brusquely and yet affably.

"On second thought, Captain Segura, you had best deliver your dispatches into the hands of His Excellency. They may be of utmost importance, and it would ill become me to cheat you of due honor. Lieutenant! A

fitting escort, six men; you yourself will ride over with the captain. I'll send word ahead, so that he may be received without delay. His Excellency will assuredly be pleased to see you. One of you gentlemen ride with word to headquarters. Dispatches from General Urrea at last."

The smile of Filisola was quizzical, cordial, more in seeming than in substance. Durant's apprehension lifted, however, at these last words. An aide clattered away, the lieutenant ordered up six troopers for escort. Filisola shook hands heartily and saluted again as he turned away.

Yet something was wrong. As Durant rode off toward the city with his escort, he felt a tightening of events. He was perhaps accused of—what? Impossible to say. Not of killing anyone, not of playing the spy, or he would have been seized without ceremony. He seemed to have roused astonishment, rather than hostility.

Well, see it through! All depended now on closing the interview with Santa Anna and getting dismissal, while Pedro Ortiz waited at the house of Angel Prieto. How long the fellow would wait, was the question. Durant knew that he himself would be assigned to quarters; the dispatches might require an answer; he must plead for an immediate return. Once beyond sight, he could duck for cover.

AGAIN he cursed the net of circumstances around him. His private errand here with Vincent Durant must mark time. Things were not going to schedule. The body under the bridge was a vague menace; the officious Pedro Ortiz was sharper peril. He dared not keep to this guise of Captain Ramon Segura a moment longer than necessary, either.

Every man in the Alamo killed, without quarter, the bodies burned in contempt! The picture blazed in his brain like the flames of the funeral pyres themselves. Fannin must learn of this. Houston must learn. The settlements, all Texas, must learn of it! Not even the wounded spared. Slaughter, without mercy!

The horses were clattering through the streets of the town now, bravely decked out as though for a fiesta. There was the plaza ahead, and the palace of the governor; now headquarters, as the sentries testified, and the fine horses at the hitch-rack in front. Durant dismounted with his escort, took the sealed dispatch from his saddle bags, and tramped in amid clanking sabers and rattling spurs.

And so, to the presence of the great man, the conqueror, the new Napoleon. He was resplendent, seated stiffly at a polished mahogany table, and surrounded by uniforms only less decorated than his own, so that they beamed as by reflected light.

A man slight of frame, making the most of his inches by military erectness and uniform collar to his ears. A man of long, smoothly shaved countenance, creole in tint, strongly marked. Impatient, intolerant, cruel, weak, a vein of passion in the high forehead—such was Santa Anna, Dictator of Mexico.

In his instant of thus appraising the butcher of the Alamo, Durant sensed that he himself stood alone in a very narrow trail whose next turn led—whither? He could not foresee. It was sentineled by Fate. But there were other signs, weather signs. Dark eyes intent upon him, haughty, amused, piercing.

Santa Anna was in a bad humor, as predicted. His gaze, sweeping Durant from head to foot, announced ready

thunder and lightning. He vented curt demand:

"From General Urrea? Your dispatches."

Durant handed over the dispatch. Santa Anna examined the address, slashed the seal with poniard paper-knife, and fastened upon the contents of the packet. His face cleared, and he relaxed. Watching him, Durant breathed more easily.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed El Presidente to his officers, "the worthy General Urrea has destroyed the rebels under Colonel Grant and is secure in San Patricio. He will march upon Refugio, and thence dispose of the principal rebel nest at Goliad, formerly La Bahia, where the pirates and filibusterers under the traitor Fannin are fortified. God and Liberty! This little war of ours is practically over. Rebels in arms now know what fate awaits them. If that fellow Houston is somewhere in the bush, we'll smoke him out and burn every cluster of American huts in Texas."

Amid murmurs of assent and adulation, Santa Anna tossed the dispatch aside. He looked on Durant again—and the room suddenly chilled. His voice leaped out with a soft note of feline anger. A deadly note.

"So! You are Captain Segura, eh?"

Durant saluted. "Yes, Your Excellency."

El Presidente played upon the word, with thin smile.

"Segura! Segura—yes, you certainly are 'assured,' my good captain. Segura, and of the Tampico Battalion by the evidence of your uniform."

DURANT'S heart sank. In the words, in the voice, in the black darting eyes, he read that he was meshed in some accursed net which he

could not comprehend. He recalled the grinning astonishment of Jacopo that he should be going to San Antonio. Then, of a sudden, Santa Anna's smile was wiped away by a violent explosion of words.

"*Santo Dios!* I never heard of such effrontery. You actually exhibit yourself in this city, you dare to come to my headquarters! It is incredible, unless you were drunk; yet you are certainly sober. How you came by these dispatches in the service of General Urrea, I don't know; but it shall be found out. There'll be time enough."

Thin fist pounded the table. "You damned insulting scoundrel! You treacherous dog!" cried out Santa Anna, convulsed with fury that darkened his swart cheeks. "You shall be stripped of that uniform! You shall make answer—but not here, not here. By the nails of Christ, one word from you and I'll have you flogged to death! Here; you," and the general beckoned an officer. "Take him away, lock him up like the common criminal he is. The council of war shall deal with him."

A quick movement around, a firm hand upon Durant's shoulder, the curt order: "Your sword, *señor!*"

His cloak was snatched away. Belt and scabbard, loosed from his waist, slithered to the floor. Durant thought of the knife inside his shirt, against his skin; he shut it desperately from his mind lest the thought betray him. The knife in its beaded sheath had values of the greatest, but never greater promise than now.

Somehow, somewhere, he was trapped and caught; he could not see how or where. What a fool he had been, to challenge this venture! To voice his anger was useless. The charge against him, whatever it was,

appeared to be something of common knowledge, yet outside his own ken. If he forced the issue, he might make a bad matter worse.

Tongue bridled, brain in a groping moil, he submitted to being marched out of the room, out of the corridors, out again into the blinding white sunlight of morning. He drew a deep breath. Bewilderment passed. His shoulders squared back and the lines of his face tightened.

If the present were despair, there remained the future!

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER MAN'S SHOES.

GUARDS closed about him and he was headed across the open plaza.

Soldiers and civilians gave way to the hurrying squad, and then pursued it with curious stares. Durant strode on, unbound but secure. The city was all strange to him, the buildings unaccustomed, the people unknown. He had been down through Mexico and up north again, always with nose to trail, with hand to knife, following the unholy scent of Vincent Durant; but here he was in new territory. Then he caught a look, a face, a gesture.

A young woman in yellow skirt, with lacy black mantilla draping her from head to waist, stepped aside from the path of the squad. She stopped short, and as he was hustled past, Durant met lustrous eyes directed full upon him from that lacy canopy, two stars shining from a moon-rifted cloud. The eyes widened with startled recognition, amazement and shocked wonder.

Then, impulsively, she drew her shawl closer about her face and turned

away with sway of hips. To Durant remained an agreeable vision of a small, piquant face, soft red lips, short uptilted nose, and those compelling eyes of starry midnight under black brows etched against white skin.

"A pretty baggage for somebody's pack," grunted a soldier of the squad.

"She is for your betters; keep silent," ordered his corporal.

"Well, a man is a man," retorted the soldier. "And a woman's a woman."

Durant visioned his prison ahead. A two-story barracks, and in the rear of this, a low row of adobe rooms. His cell was at the far end of this row. As they came to it and the door was flung open, Durant, held back, looked at the officer beside him.

"Can you tell me what charge is laid against me?"

The officer stared into his eyes, then broke out with hearty laughter.

"Come, come, that's a good one! I charge you with being a fool. Hang it, I did envy you the luck you had, but this appearance of yours shows that the devil traded it to you for your wits. And now that I've answered you, suppose you tell me the name of that fair black-eyes who certainly knew you."

"I never saw her before," Durant said.

The officer snorted at this. "So! Then she'll be an old woman before you see her again. All right; men! Clap him in."

Durant was shoved in. The heavy door was slammed and bolted.

His luck? What did the man mean? Bewilderment closed in upon him. Clearly, he was the subject of amusement to all around. He took stock of his prison. Dusty pallet, leather-seated stool too light for a weapon, entrance door, blank thick partition walls of the

drab flinty clay, the outer wall pierced six feet up with a square opening, barred, ample for ventilation. Outside he could hear the shuffling steps of a guard.

He sank down upon the stool, head in hands. So far, it was evident that he was charged with no capital crime. The sarcastic dictum of Santa Anna, the banter of the officer, proved this much. But what was forthcoming? When he thought upon Pedro Ortiz, bursting with zeal and greed, apprehension chilled him. He could stand no investigation.

That dead body under the bridge would be found. General Urrea would be queried. He must get free of these walls before the storm broke. Much depended on how long Pedro Ortiz would wait with his secret, in hope of audience and fitting reward. Durant rather guessed the little man would wait some time, and then would have difficulty in reaching the general. But—damnation! The vision rose clearer of a wall and a firing squad. Spy! Well, a man had to risk that end, in taking on such a venture, but Durant disliked having it thrust upon him by a trick of fate.

TIME passed, as he brooded and fidgeted. Sounds filtered in to him; bugle notes, the jangle and hubbub of the barracks, the stir of the guard outside, echoes of more distant life in street and plaza. He was constantly on edge for a peremptory summons. "There'll be plenty of time," Santa Anna had said.

"I hope to Heaven he's right!" muttered Durant.

The hot hours waxed and waned; noon came and passed, he remained incommunicado. Flogged to death—for what? The mystery of it was torture.

Some mistake, no doubt; some little thing that might have been explained away. Or it might not. Durant paced up and down his cell, tormented by uncertainty, by a thousand possibilities. And yet, oddly enough, the truth never once came into his mind.

The dusty afternoon died at last. He wakened to sunset, realized that he had been stretched out, asleep, on the pallet. Voices outside his window, harsh commands; the guard was being changed. The bolts of his door were shot back.

Durant, on his feet now, swung around. A soldier passed in a basin of stew, a jug of water, then straightened up and grinned at him. Glittery, reptilian eyes, unshaven swart face—then a hand uplifted, making the circle sign of thumb and forefinger.

"All is well, brother!" said the soldier. "Remember your oath. Have patience! The iron is weak."

He was gone again, the door slammed, the bolts shot home. And upon Durant, all astare and astounded, burst the truth.

"Brother" again, and the sign of the circle! This brotherhood had parts, assuredly. It had been "brother" under the bridge, when Jacopo had mistaken him for that rascally Vincent—Vincent—Vincent Durant! Why, there was the secret of the whole thing—there was the damned reason behind this embroglio!

As Vincent, he had amazed Jacopo, General Filisola, the officers. As Vincent, he had provoked the wrath of Santa Anna. Why? What had Vincent further committed, beyond engaging to deliver ten thousand in gold to El Tuerto and thus avoiding a slit throat? Well, time would tell.

There was the answer! Once more he was mistaken for Vincent, this ac-

cursed half-brother of his; yes, he might have known it. Vincent, in Mexican service, had been guilty of some scoundrelly action—as usual. Here, as in New Orleans, as elsewhere, the one brother had been mistaken for the other, and small blame for the error. They were alike, save for slightly shorter stature, a flare of deviltry in the black eyes, a blacker heart; alike, save for dishonor and the wages of hell.

And alike in the bitter hatred each bore the other.

So this explained everything! Durant threw back his head and laughed, laughed in unassumed relief. Now that he knew the worst, he could cope with it. The worst? Perhaps the best! For he had not missed that sign of thumb and finger. Now, as "brother" again, he would get out of this, with purpose unquenched—nose to trail, hand to knife! He touched the flat sheath inside his shirt.

DUSK drifted in through the window opening; the twilight in the room swiftly faded. What was it the soldier had said about the iron being weak? Durant caught at the recollection and went to the window.

He tried the bars there. One of them gave a little to his exploring fingers. Have patience—for what, for how long? He turned away from the window, and the scuff of his boots on the earthen floor maddened him. The thought of Pedro Ortiz prodded him. The bars of the window drew at him, and his fingers itched. Patience? Only until the barracks quieted, then.

The inviting darkness thickened outside. A voice pricked at him, a cautious voice from outside, below the window.

"Vicente! Do you hear?" The

words were carried upon the muted alto of a woman. "Vicente!"

"Yes, yes!" He pressed to the window. "What is it?"

"Why did you come back? Why have they put you in jail?"

"I don't know."

"It does not matter; we shall go together. The guard is friendly. You must get out at once."

"Gladly, gladly!" and Durant laughed a little. "But how?"

"A bar is loose in the window. You can dig around it. *Dios!* If I only had a knife to give you!"

"I have a knife," he cut in.

"Good! Pick the bar free, then. Everything is ready. I am waiting for you."

Durant reached inside his shirt. A woman—Vicente, eh? Not the officers alone had recognized him; perhaps this was the same black-eyes whom he had met in the plaza. So Vincent was up to his old tricks with the girls! Well, this time the affair held a certain grim humor. This time, his likeness to Vincent was helping him out of a bad hole—would help him to the throat of that devil in guise of man!

The barracks had quieted. There came no sound, save a hasty breathing outside the window. Durant pulled up the stool, unsheathed his knife; standing on the uncertain footing, he pricked about the bar, socketed in the clay casement.

After all, it was absurdly simple, once given the cue.

The bar yielded. Water had softened the hard adobe—no doubt, while he had been asleep. Yes, this brotherhood certainly had its value! With a grim chuckle, Durant tore the bar loose at the bottom; the clay at the top came away in chunks. The sound of

their fall drew no attention. Using the bar as a lever, he attacked the second bar. This, too, had been wet down, and the first bar forced it from the socket. He lowered both bars to the cell floor, gained the stool again, drew himself up to the window.

Clutching fingers, a heave of his body, and he was squeezing through the frame. With a twist and a scramble, he let himself slide outward, fell to the ground, lurched to hands and knees, then gained his feet.

A DARK cloaked shape materialized beside him. Warm hands clasped him; warm lips sought his in eager embrace. Nor did he refuse.

"Thanks be to God!" came the low words. "Here is a cloak for you, *mi corazon!*"

My heart! The face, so close, was that of the young woman in the plaza. Durant hesitated, repugnant to play the part; then she went on swiftly.

"I have horses ready, Vicente. Come! We cannot talk here. Follow me—give me your arm, rather. The house is not far, as you should know."

Durant fastened the cloak that fell about his shoulders. She took his arm, laughing a little under her breath, excitedly. They walked away openly, sedately, from the barracks row, and came presently to a narrow street.

And Durant came to decision. He was taken for Vincent—very well! Once, back in New Orleans, Vincent had played the part of Gordon Durant to shame and dishonor. That had been under cover of the stars, also; with darkness to aid, the girl who loved Gordon Durant had failed to discover the cheat and fraud.

"Good! I'll play Vincent now—but not to dishonor," thought Durant. "To

freedom. To get nose on trail again, hound him down, kill him as I've sworn. Will this Spanish girl detect the fraud? Perhaps. If so, she shall have the truth."

A pressure on his arm, a word. He was whisked through a gateway into a private courtyard, where two saddled horses idly mouthed their bits. Then the girl beside him spoke softly, intimately.

"The leather case is still where we put it, Vicente. When I saw you there in the plaza, under arrest—ah! It was terrible. Santa Anna ordered it. Does he know?"

"Bah! What could he know?" Durant evaded.

"If he suspected that we were going away together, and taking the casket—you told nobody, Vicente? Nobody?"

"Upon my honor," said Durant, "I have not mentioned it to a soul."

"Good! Then let him suspect, let him search! He'll never get it now." Her voice steadied in a passionate resolution. "Lucky that you have friends, Vicente! The soldier spoke to me, told me what to do. My father has not arrived yet; I had no trouble. But come along—you can carry the leather case for me. We'll get it and go."

She drew him away into the house, with tap-tap of urgent heels.

Durant swallowed hard, but held to his decision. What it was all about he had not the faintest idea—except that Vincent Durant had been up to his usual deviltry. He did not so much as know her name, and dared not ask it. He liked her air of capability, however, and the fresh, sweet perfume that floated in her wake.

They were in a dark hallway; she halted him near a dim lamp burning in a niche. She briefly fumbled at the wall. There was a click, then she

laughed with a note of triumph. With the gleam of her white face again, and the gesture of her extended hands, Durant found himself holding a flat, heavy weight. A leather case or casket, cased in canvas.

THE catch of the hiding place clicked. The girl, breathing warmth and eagerness, was again in motion. "It is heavy, heavier than I thought! Well, I have the key. You shall make it fast behind your saddle, Vicente." Her low laugh rippled again. "Santa Anna will never get the jewels of Amadora de la Vega for his war fund! Let him go and rob elsewhere. Even Captain Don Leon, my uncle, will approve of this when he hears."

The words struck Durant in the face like the blow of a whip, flung back as she led the way outside again. Amadora de la Vega—that was her name, then. Doña Amadora. And Captain Leon de la Vega was, or had been, her uncle. The body of the good captain still lay under the bridge. The thought of Pedro Ortiz came recurrent.

Somehow, blindly stumbling under the weight in his arms and the weight in his brain, Durant was out in the courtyard with her. He was bewildered, dazed by what he had just learned. It seemed fantastic and unreal.

What did the casket hold, then—jewels, as she had said? Strange; all of forty pounds weight in this leather case. He was beside the horse now. Pistols in the saddle boots. He cradled the burden in the poncho roll behind the saddle; by report of fingers and eyes, the canvas wrapping was fastened by laced thongs. He secured it in place. If he were playing Vincent's part now, well and good! Play it out, see whither it led him. Get to the bottom of all

this mixup before he put hand to knife again. That was plain common sense. The trail might lead him to the kill as well as another.

He handed the *doña* to her own saddle, and swung up. She wheeled for the gate. The night had thickened. Save for errant noises from liquor shops, where soldiers and civilians gathered, these precincts of the town lay silent, with never a challenge of the gently pacing hooves.

Durant let the woman slant their course, which led through byways and dark streets. She knew the town, he did not. She spoke not. His horse pressed along with hers on loose rein, his senses probing the obscurity around.

Then, almost before he could realize it was true, they were on the outskirts of town. They plashed through a stream. Some unguarded ford of the river itself, Durant judged. Now they were in the open, sparsely broken by huts, and were hailed by barking dogs. She swung sharply aside into the open murk of a field, and then her mount was reined in. A traveled road was before them.

"Heaven be thanked, we're out!" Relief, tension relaxed, spoke in her voice. "Isn't this the Bahia road, Vicente? But we can't keep to it. If there's pursuit, if they seek us, they will look in the south. I think we should make east, at least until morning. Toward Gonzales, eh? But you decide. My work's done, and you know best of this matter."

"The east, by all means," Durant said. "And Gonzales."

"Very well; turn left into the Gonzales road, a little way on." She gathered up her reins, and her little laugh rang uncertainly. "We can turn off for the south again, in the morning.

The Texans are in the east, in Gonzales itself. They'll not like your uniform when they hear about the Alamo! It is of the Tampico Battalion, like that of my uncle. Ah!" She sniffed the night air. "It is horrible; it will never clear. I shan't forget until we're in Cuba."

THE Alamo, then! To Durant it seemed that her subtle perfume failed to counter the whiff of stale human ashes clinging to his nostrils, permeating the very air. He pricked his horse on. If this were the Goliad road, as she said, they must head left to reach Gonzales. Well, why not? Best let Vincent wait, let the knife stay cool till he learned the truth behind all this.

"Very well, head east," he said.

Gonzales was seventy miles away. Goliad might have been already taken; the Urrea dispatch had been ominous.

Her voice reached him again, broke through his thoughts, as they cantered on.

"We'll go to Cuba together, my Vicente! When we reach the coast we can find a ship for New Orleans. Did you hear about the victories? We need not worry about the Texans; General Urrea is attending to them. Still, I wish you did not have that uniform, Vicente! I did not know you were of my uncle's regiment; why did you never tell me?"

Durant smiled under the misty stars.

"True, I never thought to mention it," he said. He did not need to give great heed to his words. She was paying more attention to her own, to her thoughts, than to what he murmured.

"We'll turn south at dawn, yes," she was saying. "We'll join my uncle in San Patricio and be safe there. And there'll be good people to help us on

our way, Vicente. Tomorrow we can stop at the Ortiz *rancho*. Pedro Ortiz is a cousin of Angel Prieto, you know. Señor Prieto, my good friend, told us that Señor Ortiz would send us on—"

Again her words hit like a blow, provoking amazement, an insane desire to burst into raucous laughter. The names lashed home. Was there no escape from that dead man under the bridge? Or his accursed uniform of the Tampico Battalion?

They found the Gonzales road and jogged along, hour upon hour, cloaked against the thin mist and the cold night.

Doña Amadora chattered, and the details came forth, but not the details Durant most wanted to hear. She knew nothing of the reason for his arrest.

Otherwise, the situation assumed shape, in some respects, and Durant could assort the facts.

Vincent—that whelp Vincent again!—and this pretty *doña* were appointed to make off for the Gulf and New Orleans and thence to Cuba, taking the Vega jewels, to save them from the war levy of El Presidente. No doubt, to preserve them for the war levy of Vincent Durant, who had been in the Mexican service, and who certainly was the lover of Doña Amadora. She anticipated great happiness with her Vincent in Cuba; she prattled of it as she rode, and wakened from dozing to prattle anew.

Gordon Durant knew her Vincent better than she did, and had his own notions. He himself was not going to the Gulf, not going to the south at all, and still less to the *rancho* of Pedro Ortiz.

No. He owed her a debt, and he would pay it. Save her from that devil Vincent, place her in safety with her jewels at Gonzales, tell her the truth

about the man she loved, the bitter truth, and prove it. This must be his errand now; play the man's part. The vengeance trail had forked. If he could save her, and those jewels behind his saddle, from the devil's claws of Vincent, he should do so.

And what of Vincent, then? Well, if he had missed rendezvous with the *doña*, he might still turn up in San Antonio. Apparently he had not been there after all, or had been there and departed, to come again. In which case, honest Vincent might find himself in a pickle, might be taken for the Captain Segura of the dispatches. Durant's lips curved bitterly at the thought. No such luck! That crafty devil was too smart.

ON and on they rode, Durant talking little. They made brief halts; to breathe the horses, to water them, to stretch limbs while Durant tightened girths, to readjust the heavy chest behind his saddle. Once, sinking to the ground with a little sigh, the *doña* had slept for a few brief minutes, leaned within his arm; relaxed there, soft and fragrant as a flower, while the breath from her parted lips fanned his cheek. Durant had small allure of her. Another woman—the other woman—lingered against his background of life with harsh and false accusation. That, too, must wait until the vengeance trail was reddened and ended.

So the long night passed, and the miles drifted behind with the stars.

"We will go into the south soon, Vicente?"

She was growing uneasy now, vexed at his dark silence, his lack of attention, his continual following of the road. The chaparral had lightened a little, the air was deep and chill with the night's dew, as they rode onward into the dawn.

"You're in uniform, remember; we must not keep on too far, Vicente! There will be Texans ahead. They are terrible, these Tejanos."

"They're in Gonzales, not here," Durant said, to quiet her. "We're nowhere near Gonzales, Doña Amadora. It's too soon to turn southward; we must await a trail, and the daylight."

Then, at last, sky and earth were bright with the rising sun. The road behind lay all clear of pursuit. The road ahead dipped below a rise veiled with chaparral, and they rode on into the unknown. The trail wended on down and down again into a brushy swale pungent with the greening tips of spring—the desert miracle.

"Dios mio! Your pistols, Vicente!" burst forth the girl suddenly, turning a

tragic face to him, a face large-eyed and wearily appealing. "No, we are lost—"

Durant's eyes narrowed, but he made no move for the weapons. A man with barring rifle had appeared in the road ahead. To right and left two mounted men crashed through the brush. Doña Amadora, now white and defiant, sat her saddle stiffly.

Texans, by the grace of God! Durant relaxed, drew a deep breath. His present problem seemed to be solved; until he caught the gaze of the girl turned to him, her dark eyes widened with terror. He could imagine the thought unuttered: "Your uniform, Vicente!"

Again, that accursed uniform of the Tampico Battalion.

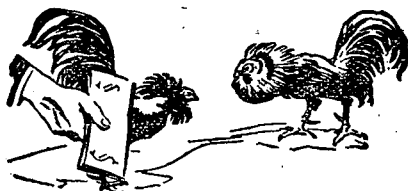
TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

The Three Sacred Emblem

THERE are three sacred treasures of Japan which have been passed down through the centuries and which are installed in shrines. There is the Sacred Mirror which is supposed to reflect the human heart. This is in the Ise shrine near Nagoya. Another is the Sacred Necklace and emblem of peace, which is kept in the Royal Palace in Tokyo. The third is the Divine Sword which is 2,000 years old and is enshrined at Nagoya.

—J. T. Champion.

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PROBAK JUNIOR

A Deal in Dogieville



By

W. C. TUTTLE

IT sure takes all kinds of people to make a world. Limpy Lucas hit the bull's eye right on the old optic nerve when he said: "There's white, black, brown and red men. And then there's mean ones, kind ones, with all sorts and degrees mixed in between 'em—and then comes Bill Spivins and Justice of the Peace Howley."

"You and old Socker-tees has much in common, Limpy," says Silent Knight, who used to be educated.

"The biggest mistake I ever made,"

says Bill Spivins, Sheriff of Dogieville, shovin' his ugly mug against the bars of our community cell, "was the openin' night of Singer Brothers' Stupendous Carnival of Unparalleled Wonders—when I didn't shoot all four of yuh."

"Still," replies Windy Wilson, slippin' a jack off the bottom of the deck when Limpy wasn't lookin', "there's a law against murder—even in Dogieville, Bill."

"Murder!" snorts Bill. "Dogie-

When four drunken cowboys are presented with a circus menagerie, the worst can be expected to happen—and it does

ville would have built a monument to me."

"Dogieville," says Silent, "would do anythin', as long as it was queer."

"Like puttin' us in jail for thirty days on the charge of committin' assault and battery on a carnival," says I.

"Well, yuh did assault 'em, yuh know," insists Bill. "You four drunken rannahans plumb ruined the show—and yuh ruined Dogieville, too."

"Interestin', even if it ain't true," says Limpy. "Yo're lyin'."

"Lyin'?" Bill mops his ugly face. "I wish I was. You four snakehunters did bust up that carnival. They didn't have much money to start with; so Dogieville gave 'em credit; and when you four drunken saddle-slickers ruined the show, Dogieville lost. They couldn't pay their bills; so we slapped 'tachments on everythin'. Natcherally the county has got to hold said chattels, consistin' of a elephant, one lion, one tiger, a dozen pinto horses, one zeeber, twelve assorted monkeys and one extraordinary ape. There's one busted Ferris Wheel, some tents, seven fancy wagons; Gawd only knows what else."

"'Cordin' to law, we can't sell 'em until a certain time has e-lapsed—and now the county refuses to pay the feed bills. The county says they ain't in no damn circus business. Dogieville ain't got no money to pay off the feed man and the butcher—and you four blasted bug-heads, who caused all this, are livin' off the county."

"Let's all break down and cry," suggests Limpy.

"So yuh see," sighs Bill, "where I made a mistake in not killin' all four of yuh that evenin'."

"Why don'tcha turn them animals loose?" I asks.

"And have 'em perilin' the country?"

"Shoot 'em," says Limpy. "Yo're awful dumb, Bill."

"The folks won't let me. They want their money—not a firin' squad."

"Has the owners of the carnival washed their hands of the whole works?" asks Silent Knight.

"Well, I s'pose they has. The Strong Man is still here."

"What's he doin' here?" I asks.

"Tryin' to git his stren'th back. After Silent dropped that bull calf off the top of the Ferris Wheel and landed him on top of the Strong Man, this here Strong Man has kinda been in the sere and yaller leaf, as yuh might say. Doc Doolittle has been workin' on his vertebray with a monkey-wrench every day, and he says he can see improvement. Mebbe Doc can, but I can't. Why, that feller ain't strong enough to lift his hat to a lady."

"There ain't no ladies in Dogieville, anyway," says Silent.

"You forgit my wife!" snaps Bill.

"Gladly," says Silent. "But things is bad everywhere, Bill. We don't mind this here incarceration. Two middlin' good meals per day, and the beds ain't so bad. Come back again, when yo're feelin' more cheerful, Bill."

BILL SPIVINS came back that evenin', and he brought Justice of the Peace Howley along with him. The justice is spavined, got a ring-bone on each hoof, and wears two sets of glasses at the same time. He's packin' a bulky book under his arm.

"Hm-m-m-m-m!" says the justice, peerin' in at us. "Hm-m-m-m-m!"

"Hm-m-m-m-m, to you, sir," says Limpy, "and a couple ha-a-aws."

"The court has reached a new decision," says the justice. "Yore case has been duly re-viewed, and contents noted. You still has two weeks per

each to serve in durance vile; but the new rulin' indicates that the two weeks is suspended, and assesses fines of forty-five dollars per each, makin' a grand total of one hundred and eighty dollars."

"Ho-o-old fast!" yelps Limpy. "No, yuh don't, you eight-eyed old *pelicano!* That hundred and eighty belongs to me—individual. And I demands its return, intact, comes the end of this thirty-day sentence. We stays put, justice."

"Contempt of court, eh?" snorts the justice.

"This ain't no court, you high-bind-in' old hedgehog!" yells Limpy.

"You refuses to pay yore fines?"

"Not a slick dime," declares Limpy. "We stays right here."

"Well," sighs the justice, "the law don't give us the right to coerce a prisoner. All I can do is sentence 'em to six months, twice a year, and let the sentences run concurrently."

BUT they comes back the next day, sets down near our cell, and looks through what I figure is a mail order catalogue. They're kinda mumblin' to each other, when all to once the justice says:

"There she is, Bill! Smith *versus* State of Arizony."

"Yo're right, Justice," agrees Bill. "Disturbin' the peace—hm-m-m-m. Fined forty-five dollars . . . 'pealed to Supreme Court. Promosed immunity . . . hm-m-m-m."

"Exactly," agrees the justice. "Signed separate applications . . . well, I suppose it's all we can do."

"Git 'em to sign a receipt, and turn 'em loose," sighs Bill.

The justice has four pieces of kinda yaller paper, about the size of a twenty dollar bill—jist blank paper. Bill

brings some ink and a pen, and they has each of us sign one of them strips of paper.

"There's shore some queer kinks in yore laws," says Limpy. "Do yuh mean we sign them papers and git turned loose?"

"Foot-loose and fancy free," says Bill Spivins, as he unlocks the jail. He hands Limpy a piece of white paper. "Here's yore receipt," he says.

"Don't we each git one?" I asks.

"That one receipt covers everythin', Lonesome. Bon joor, gents."

We walks outside, where the light is better, and Limpy reads that receipt.

"Of all the cock-eyed things on earth!" howls Limpy. "Bill Spivins, are you crazy, or are we crazy?"

"That all in the point of view," grins the sheriff. "Boys, you've done bought somethin'."

"Listen," wheezes Limpy. "This is a bill-of-sale for all them damned animals, made out to the four of us, for the sum of eight hundred dollars. Eight hundred dollars! My Gawd, Bill, we never owned eight hundred dollars in our lives."

"Justice Howley," said the sheriff, "is jist now puttin' that money in the bank."

"Our eight hundred dollars?" gasps Windy Wilson.

"Yore eight hundred dollars," grins Bill Spivins. "Yuh see, bein' as you fellers are prisoners of our great commonwealth, I had the right to open yore letters. The last will and testament of Old Man Washburn, down in Scissorbill Valley, has just been settled, and they sent each of you horse-thieves checks for two hundred dollars. Them was the checks that you-all endorsed over to us, accepted a bill-of-sale—and there yuh are."

Silent jist let loose all holts and sat

down on the sidewalk. Windy tried to yawn, gets a kink in his jaw, and jist stands there, mouth wide open.

I leaned nonchalantly against the front of the office, but somebody must have moved the place, 'cause I fell into an alley ten feet away from the front of the office.

EIGHT hundred dollars from the estate of Old Man Washburn!

And we thought everythin' went to Foreign Missions. It was thisaway. The four of us stole cattle for one solid year for Washburn. We was buildin' up a herd, which the Old Man was to sell, and split the money five ways. But some hill-billy heaved lead into the Old Man, before the deal was made, and they told us the Old Man left everythin' he owned to some missionary layout, which was aimin' to learn cannibals to eat their relatives with forks, instead of fingers.

And now, through some hook or crook, they'd sent each of us a check for two hundred apiece. Imagine that? And, like four of the dangdest fools in Arizona, we'd endorsed them checks and accepted a bill-of-sale for an elephant, a tiger, a lion, and—aw, shucks, we've got everythin' in the world that a cowpuncher shouldn't have, even if he'd been drinkin' bad whisky for a month.

"Where's my hundred and eighty?" yelps Limpy, comin' out of his trance.

"Yore eighty, yuh mean," corrects Bill. "I'll give it to yuh."

"My hundred and eighty!" howls Limpy.

"It's thisaway," says Bill. "Before the creditors will let us sell that there val'able mee-nagerie to you four fellers, we has to put up a hundred dollars ag'in' what they've already et. Knowin' how bad you fellers wanted them

animals, et cettery, I paid the hundred. Even at that, yuh shore bought a lot for yore money."

"Oh, my!" wails Silent. "Oh, my!" He's got that bill-of-sale in his hand. "Listen t' this, you fellers! It says that we agree to take all them animals out of this county within twenty-four hours after receet of this here paper."

"Yeah," says Bill, smoothin' his mustache. "I forgot to tell yuh that them creditors won't sell out less'n we write in that there provision. Even at that, yuh shore bought—"

"No!" interrupts Silent. "Yuh can't do that to us, Bill."

"But we've done it," declares Bill Spivins.

"Well," says Limpy, "give us that eighty dollars and our guns."

"I'll give yuh the guns," says Bill. "We're holdin' the eighty dollars as a bond ag'in' yuh, to keep the peace."

"I had a dollar and sixty cents," says I.

"I know yuh did, Lonesome," admits Bill. "But we've done used it for a filin' fee. In this law business there's allus little things comin' up, yuh know."

Well, what could we do, I ask yuh? We got our guns and went over to the Roundup Saloon, without a dime in our pockets, and four thirsts a mile long. There wasn't anythin' to do except use force. Limpy held Ole Swensen, the bartender, while we collected eight quarts of whisky from behind the bar. Like Limpy said:

"The hundred and eighty bucks are gone; so we might as well disturb the peace right away."

WE left Ole cryin' his heart out. Limpy told him that Bill Spivins had eighty dollars' worth of keepin' the peace money, and then we

went down to the livery stable, where we meets Bill Spivins again. Bill hands Windy a paper, which turns out to be a bill for fifty-six dollars board bill for our four horses, two weeks, at a dollar a day per horse.

"Sorry," says Bill, meek-like and mild, "but unless yuh pay this bill, yuh can't have yore horses."

"I hope there ain't no law ag'in' us goin' in and lookin' at our mee-nagerie, is there?" asks Silent.

"Shore, not," agrees Bill. "The elephant is out in the corral, along with the zeeber and them ponies. The rest of the specimens is over in my old store buildin'. The rent's paid up to t'day."

"What rent you gittin'?" I asks.

"A hundred dollars a month."

"For that old wreck of a buildin'?"

"It's the smells," says Bill. "I'll never git 'em out."

"I'll tell yuh how yuh can do it, Bill," says Silent.

"How?" asks Bill.

"You and Justice Howley go in there for fifteen minutes, and nobody on earth can ever smell jungle animals in there ag'in'."

"I don't reckon I know what yuh mean," says Bill.

"If yuh look in a natcheral hist'ry book, you'll find that a skunk *ain't* a jungle animal," states Silent.

"Well," says Bill, "all I can say is that yore horses have been attached by the law, until yuh pay this bill for feed. And the first time any of yuh break the peace of Dogieville, I'll forfeit that there eighty dollars."

Well, we left Bill Spivins propped against the doorway. Windy took an awful chance when he socked Bill with a full bottle of whisky; he might have busted the bottle. Then we went out to the corral and took a look at our animals. There's the Strong Man, set-

tin' on the fence, lookin' at 'em, too. He's shore lost a lot of weight since Silent threw that bull calf off the Ferris Wheel and hit him on the head.

We gave him a drink out of all four bottles, and he perks up a little. Then we told him about the forced sale of the animals. He don't like Dogieville any better than we do, but he's been too weak to git away.

"That horse-doctor has been treatin' me for spavin, ring-bone and bots," says he, kinda quaverin-like. "It ain't human."

"It shore ain't, Sampson," says Silent. "All you had was calf-on-the-neck. What's the name of that elephant?"

"Judas. He's as kind as a kitten. If he wasn't, this fence wouldn't hold him for a minute. When I feel lonesome, I come here and play with Judas."

"Play?" asks Windy, takin' the bottle from his lips. "Play with that . . . thing?"

"Sure. He wouldn't hurt anythin'."

"What about that lion and tiger and zebra?" I asks.

"None of 'em ever hurt anythin' in their lives. That lion or tiger will foller yuh, jist like a dog."

"Yea-ah?" snorts Limpy. "But suppose they catch yuh."

"They'd just rub against yuh and purr."

"Well," says Limpy, "they'd have to be a damn sight faster'n any lion or tagger I ever seen—to rub ag'in' me and purr. They'd shore be rubbin' and purrin' at full speed ahead. Have another shot of cawn, Sampson; yo're too sober to be lyin' the way yuh are."

Sampson was willin' to drink. Just before he fell off the fence he said:

"What'll yuh give me 'f I git yore money back?"

"Half the money and all the rest of the world," says Silent.

THEN we went back to the Round-up Saloon, where Ole is still tryin' to dry his tears over the loss of them eight quarts. We ain't been in there five minutes when here comes Bill Spivins, Shotgun Solleder, Ornery Olsen, Tinear Thompson and Bull Benson. Every one of them five snake-hunters are packin' sawed-off shotguns.

"Where's the riot?" I asks Bill Spivins.

"That depends on you fellers," says Bill. "Us five is a committee, choosed by Dogieville, to see that you fellers take away them animals—and not turn 'em loose. Yore agreement says that you'll remove said animals from Dogieville within twenty-four hours. And I jist want to re-mark that I've taken yore eighty dollars deposit for that tunk on the head, down at the livery-stable."

Well, sir, that made me mad. I reached right over and hit Bill on the end of his big nose. It knocked Bill up against the bar, and kinda agitated him, I reckon. He gurgled a little, and then he says:

"Lonesome Day, I've got a good notion to run you in."

I grabbed that shotgun out of his hands, and I says:

"Bill Spivins, I ain't got no place to run you in; but I shore as hell can run yuh out of a lot of places."

It was a good race, as races go. I was aimin' to pet him on the head with the butt of that shotgun, and he was just the length of the shotgun ahead when we started. At the hundred yard marker I'd jist gained the thickness of the butt-plate, when Bill went under a hitch-rack—and I forgot to stoop.

They tell me that the hammers of the

shotgun caught on the top pole of the rack, and for a minute pandemonium and buckshot reigned in Dogieville. Ornery Olsen lost a front tooth, and Shotgun Solleder got a buckshot through the lobe of his left ear.

When I woke up on a bed in the horse-doctor's place, here is him and the county surveyer and his assistant workin' over me.

"I reckon we've got it right, Doc," says the surveyer. "Usin' Old Baldy as a base-line, the figgers show that this pelican's neck is off three degrees to the north."

"My guess, exactly," says Doc. "I know exactly where to bend him."

Then the three of 'em hopped onto me, and when they finished workin' over me, from belt-line to dandruff, I'm all laced to a bedslat. Then they rolled me over, and went out for a drink.

I was a little stiff, of course, but I found my pants, opened my pocket-knife and cut myself loose from the bed-slat. Then I put on my clothes, buckled on my gun, and went down the street. There wasn't a danged thing wrong with me, except that I kept lookin' over my left shoulder all the time; and my right foot kept on kickin' up behind.

I took my bearin's and headed for the Roundup Saloon; but mebber my rudder wasn't workin', 'cause I stopped against the wall of Bill Spivins' old warehouse, where most of the menagerie is housed. Here's Limpy, Silent and Windy, settin' together in the shade. I let loose, and bounced to a stop beside 'em. They've swiped a gallon of liquor, and they shore look it.

"Who the hell are you, Wobble-Legs?" asks Silent.

"I'm Goody Two-Shoes," says I, "and I'm takin' a basket of Gila mon-

sters to m' grandmother, you old ring-tailed lobo."

"It's Lonesome!" whoops Windy. "Why, they said you'd be a cripple for life, Lonesome."

"I prob'ly won't live that long," says I. "Give me a drink."

MY neck is so twisted that a drink goes down just like a bullet goes out of a rifle barrel. Sort of a *swish, zing, plup!* After about a pint, Windy says:

"Yuh may have to eat with yore back to the table, Lonesome; but there's no stoppage. We're shore glad you came. We've been arguin' over who owns what; so we decided to deal cards. As she lays now, we each owns an undivided one-fourth. We want to *know*.

"So we're goin' to deal the cards. First ace draws the elephant, second ace draws the lion, et cettery. Don't it look reasonable?"

"Deal me out," says I. "I prob'ly won't live until sundown, anyway, and we don't want to leave them animals intestate."

"It might be an answer to our problem," says Silent. "I'll do the dealin'."

"Go ahead," says I. "I can't see the deal—but it's all right."

Silent dealt out the whole deck. Windy picked up my cards and gave 'em to me. Then they all shook hands with me, wished me the best of good-luck, and went away, takin' the jug. I had every ace and face-card in the damn deck; and between the cards is that bill-of-sale, endorsed on the back by Windy, Silent and Limpy. Windy comes back in a few minutes and gives me a beer bottle full of whisky.

"Jist somethin' to smooth yore path, Lonesome," says he, a sob in his voice. "It shows that I remembered yuh to the end. We've done notified Bill

Spivins that we've washed our hands of everythin'."

"Yeah," says I, "and before I git through with yuh, you'll wish you'd washed yore necks, too."

"I'll pack yore last words to the boys," says he, and went weavin' away. I upended that quart and listened to the whisky cuttin' around the grooves.

"Well," says I, "there ain't never been a Day put up ag'in' a job that he couldn't do."

If I do say it myself, I should be ashamed of myself for not bein' one of the biggest men in the State. I've got it in me to go awful high, if I'd devote more time to bigger things. Then I got to thinkin' about Sampson, the strong man. He might go in with me in this circus business. I've sure got what it takes to make a circus.

I remembered where we left him over by the elephant corral; so I went due north, got both hands on the fence, and follered it around to the gate. Sampson wasn't there. I can't climb the fence; so I went through the gate. There's a whole flock of spotted ponies, and that convict jackass, which they call a zebra; but I'm more interested in Judas, that dad-blamed elephant. I could ride the zebra, and herd the ponies, but I ain't jist sure of what yuh can do with a elephant.

I took me another drink and went over to Judas. He's shore a big son-of-a-gun, when yuh get close to him. It's gettin' kinda dark out there in the corral. I reaches up, takes holt of his ear, and I says, "C'mere t' me, pardner!"

MEBBE I'm one of them fellers who don't know their own strength, 'cause that danged elephant grunted, broke down in front, and come right down to his knees. If

I'd had my full strength, I'd prob'ly turned him plumb over. As it was, he kinda bumped my knees, and I fell part way over his danged head. And the next thing I know he's back on his feet, and I'm sprawled across his head.

Well, I got straightened up, and had another drink. I plumb forgot to fasten that gate, and all them ponies and the zebra are out. I didn't know what to do, so I says to Judas:

"Pardner, you must know a hell of a lot more about elephants than I do; so go ahead and show me what yuh can do. If I don't like it, I'll shore tell yuh about it."

I reckon he understood my language, 'cause he started right out toward that gate, sheered off about four feet to the right, and went through the fence. The rear door of the livery stable was open about two feet. Judas reached out, hooked his trunk around the edge, kinda set himself, and ripped that door out jist as easy as I could rip a page out of a book. I said, "Pardner, yo're the first ray of sunshine I've seen since the carnival. I don't know what yore idea is, but yore preliminary work suits me fine. Keep it up."

I took me another drink, while Judas examines the busted entrance, and then we started on. Fifty feet ahead is the wide doorway of the stable, and as he starts on, Bill Spivins steps into that doorway, wavin' a two-barreled shotgun. Jist behind him is Sampson.

"Stop, in the name of the law!" howls Bill. "Stop that jiggernaut, in the name of the law, Lonesome Day!"

Well, sir, that elephant reached out his trunk, yanked that shotgun out of Bill's hands, and flipped it plumb up to the high ceilin' of the stable. It hit the top, caromed off a beam, and came down behind us on that plank floor.

Ker-whamboo! Both barrels of that

gun went off, and I ain't far wrong when I say that both loads hit Judas right in the slack of his pants. I felt him kinda bunch under me, like a bronc does when he's primin' himself to go high and handsome.

Don't ever try to tell me that a elephant can't move quick. I grabbed him by his two eyebrows, and we went out of there like a shot. I gets a flash of a rearin' team, hitched to a load of hay; and then we hit that hay dead center. I reckon I kinda got the wind knocked out of me, 'cause I didn't see exactly what happened for a few moments.

Then I seen Judas pick up a wagon wheel, whirl it over his head, and he flung it straight up the street toward a crowd of men. Then that danged elephant stuck up his trunk and let out a howl that could have been heard in Yuma, and away we went. Mebbe he was confused, or mebbe he didn't care a dang, 'cause he started up a wooden sidewalk, smashin' through it for about fifty feet, where he seemed to git tired, sheered off to the left, and knocked every post out from under the porch of the general store.

EVERY horse at the Roundup hitch-rack busted loose, and it's a good thing they did, 'cause Judas went straight for it, knockin' it plumb out of the ground. People are runnin' and yelpin'. Judas is kinda moanin' to himself.

I've got a hunch he's still tryin' to figure out what's itchin' the seat of his pants.

He don't take long in makin' up his mind, I can say that for him. He went straight toward the rear of the Roundup Saloon, knockin' down everythin' in his path, and headed for Bill Spivins' old warehouse, where the rest of my circus is stored. The door is closed,

but that don't make no difference. As he backed off and put down his head, I slipped off his rump and grabbed him by the root of his tail.

Just as Judas makes a surge toward the door, it flies open, and there's Bill Spivins. I'm liangin' to Judas' tail, with both feet braced against the back of his legs, kinda high up, as yuh might say. Before Bill has a chance to move, Judas reaches out, grabs Bill by the slack of his shirt, yanks him off the ground and gives him a flip. Nothin' mean about Judas. He jist set Bill aside about fifty feet, and shucked him out of his shirt.

Then we went right on into the warehouse. I hears a lot of yellin' behind us, and the door bangs shut just as we hit them cages. I'm kinda tired of playin' caboose for Judas, so I drops off. It's pretty doggone dark in there, too. The lion is makin' a noise that would cause any doctor to send him to a high-dry climate, and Judas is kinda mumblin' to himself.

I hears lotsa noise outside. Somebody is yellin':

"Brace that door! Brace her tight! They've prob'ly killed him by this time, but we'll git it off his carcass, Bill."

I kinda wondered who was goin' to git what off my carcass. Then I hears Sampson yellin':

"Lemme handle it. I tell yuh that elephants, tigers and lions are natcheral enemies. Lonesome Day is as dead as hell by this time; so yuh don't need to worry about *him*."

"Who's worryin' about him?" asks Bill Spivins.

"I am," says I, but my voice don't carry three feet.

All this time that tiger, lion and elephant are shore tellin' the world what they think of each other. I hears bars bein' smashed, and the air is full

of dust from the dirt floor. But I don't care. If I can have my choice, I'll take a fightin' menagerie in preference to Dogieville. Anyway, I'm numb all over. Then I hears Bill Spivins sayin':

"I'll deal with Lonesome Day, jist as soon as I can get my hands on him; and I don't need any help from you snake-hunters."

He don't, eh? I can tie one hand behind me, shut my left eye, and whip Bill Spivins on a sheepskin. And him out there, lyin' about what he can do alone. I finds that I'm in the sere and yaller leaf, when it comes to goin' places. The fight has kinda died down to just a chawin' match; so I crawls over toward the door in the dirt. I've allus been more or less bow-legged, but now I finds that I'm sort of bench-legged. Even when I'm standin' up, the seat of my pants ain't two feet off the dirt.

I GET hold of that door, and I yelps:

"Start yore deal, Bill Spivins! Lonesome Day is here. Open the door, and try that layin' on of hands you've been braggin' about."

"My Gawd, he's still alive!" yelps Bill.

"Tryin' to slander the dead, was yuh?" I yells. "Open the door, you bug-headed, bat-eared cross between a sidewinder and a wood-tick!"

Somebody is yankin' away the barrier, and then the door sags open about three feet. There's a whole crowd outside, and somebody is holdin' up a lighted lantern. Right in front of me stands Bill Spivins, minus his shirt, one eye blacked and his chin skinned.

I tried to spit on my right palm, and it hit Bill square in the eye. That's how bad my aim is. And just then I heard that lion cut loose the grand-

daddy of all coughs, and he went between my legs so fast that I turned completely over in the air.

I reckon the tiger was right behind him, 'cause when I came down I landed on that big cat, knockin' him sideways. It delayed the departure long enough for me to hook both hands around his furry tail, and we went out of there like a striped comet with a bow-legged tail.

Oh, shore I hit the ground once in a while. When we passed the front of the Roundup Saloon I happened to be travelin' high, and in the lamplight I seen the lion ahead of us, with Bill Spivins on backwards, ridin' high and handsome. We passed Shotgun Solleder's hotel, and I had a feelin' that we're gainin' on Bill and his lion.

Then we swung to the left. It kinda flashed through my mind that now we must be in the vicinity of Shotgun's corral—and then we were. The tiger went through all right. But just at that time I happened to be perpendicular, instead of horizontal—and them poles was not over three feet apart.

I heard my backbone go *clickety, clack-clunk!* I went down in a heap, and I heard somebody sayin', "Well, I've got one of yuh, anyway."

Somethin' got me by one leg and started draggin' me away.

I didn't even care about that, except that I was pickin' up a lot of old tin cans and bottles and pieces of balin'-wire. I figured that the tiger came back and was haulin' me out in the brush, intendin' to use me for supper. But I didn't care.

All to once my belt busted, my pants pulled off, and there I am, all alone. I got to my feet, and I find I've got more angles to my body than there is in a rail fence built by a cross-eyed man. I got my bearin's, and I find I'm

out in front of that damned warehouse again.

I tacks over to the doorway and go inside. There's what's left of Bill Spivins, with a lantern in one hand and my pants in the other. He opens that busted tiger cage and dumps the pants inside.

"Stay in there, dang yuh," he croaks. "Next time yuh feel like comin' out—remember Bill Spivins, the Sheriff of Dogieville."

THEN he turns around, starts for the doorway, when he sees me.

"Hello—thing," says he. "I—I—are you Lonesome Day—or am I seein' things?"

"I am—and you always have been," says I, as I leans nonchalant-like against a circus cage, which is twenty feet away. It made me mad, 'cause I was sure Bill yanked that cage away; so I reached out one foot, hooked his ankle, and he sat down hard beside me.

"I'm Bill Spivins," says he, "but I don't remember the rest."

"I heard you was lookin' for me," says I. "Since you mentioned the name, I believe I'm Lonesome Day."

"Why, yeah, that's right. I jist wonder—oh, yeah! You own a lot of animals, don'tcha?"

"Yeah, I've got quite a collection—such as they are."

"That's right. Oh, yea-a-ah! I remember now. Wait a minute."

He dug inside his shirt and brought out the biggest roll of money I ever seen.

"Yuh ain't got no use for them animals, have yuh?" he asked.

"Not right now, I ain't, Mr. Spivins."

"Have yuh got that bill-of-sale?"

I had. Bill took it, and gave me all that money.

"Eight hundred dollars," says Bill. "The animals are mine."

"Bill," says I, "if my hands wasn't paralyzed, I'd grab yuh and kiss yuh, if I knew where my lips had been moved to."

"Yuh wouldn't, if yuh knowed what I know."

"I would—if I knowed *all* there was to know, Bill."

"Listen t' me, you saddle-slicker," says he. "A man named Bill Singer wrote a letter to Sampson, the Strong Man, tellin' him that the carnival had been refinanced, and they're comin' back to git them there animals. He said they'd pay five thousand dollars and all expenses. And you—you poor, bug-headed brush-popper—you sold out for a measly eight hundred dollars. Now, git to hell out of here and let *my* animals alone!"

I don't remember how I got out. I wandered all over the country before I managed to hit that livery stable door anywhere near center. I found Sampson, the Strong Man, settin' in there on a stool, under a lantern. He's got a valise, and he's all dressed up.

"You ain't forgot me, have yuh?" he asks. "I've been expectin' yuh. There's a train through here in thirty

minutes; so we might as well make the split."

"Split?" says I. "My Gawd, do I look like I needed splittin'?"

"That money," says he. "The money yuh got for them animals. Yuh said you'd give me half, if I made the deal."

"You made the deal?"

"I showed that letter to Bill Spivins—the letter from Bill Singer, the carnival man. That's why Bill wanted the animals back. He figures to make forty-two hundred dollars on the deal. Is it any wonder he paid yuh eight hundred?"

I gave Sampson half of the money, and he picked up his valise.

"You ain't so damned smart," says I. "Why the hell didn't you dig up the money and make the deal yourself?"

He stopped in the doorway and looked back at me.

"Thanks for the split, cowboy," says he. "All it cost me was a sheet of paper and a bit of ink."

I said, "Sampson, what the hell is yore right name, anyway?"

"Bill Singer," says he. "Remember me to Bill Spivins."

This carnival business is fine, if yo're built to stand it.

THE END

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The Brothers

Novelette—

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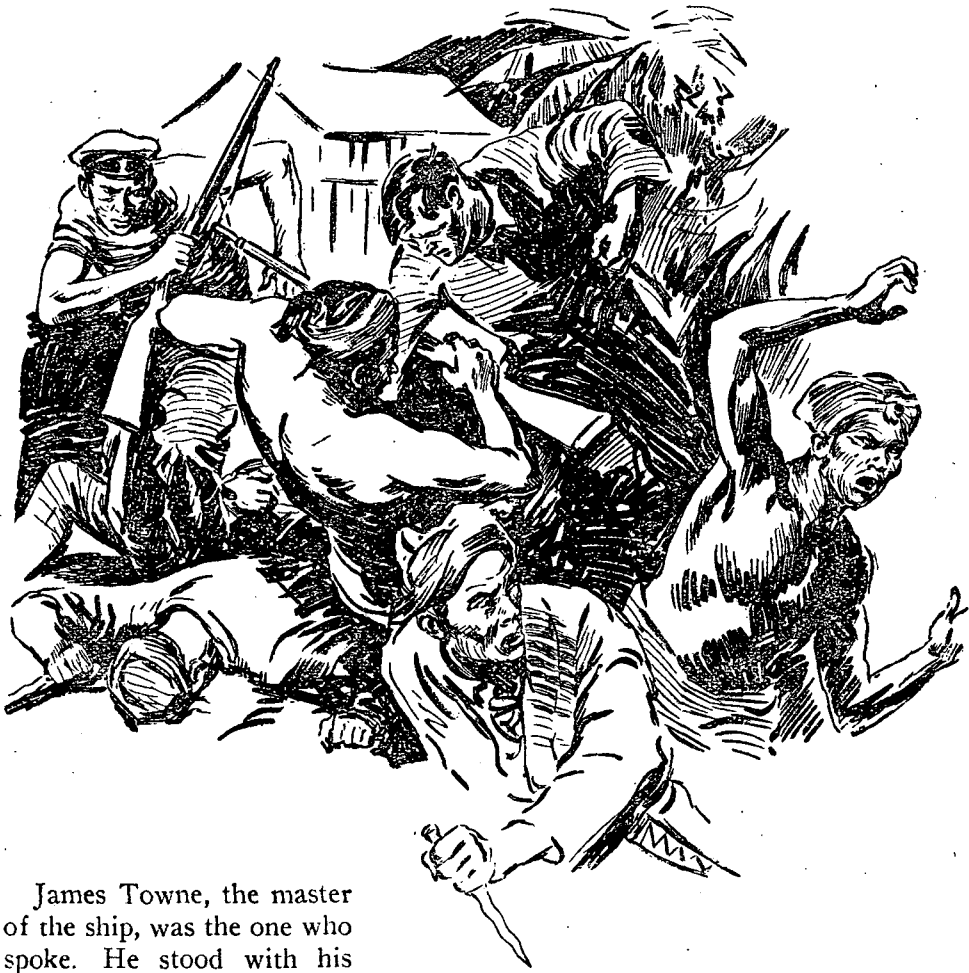
These two brothers had hated each other for years—and now a typhoon and a native revolt threatened to stir them to a bitterness far worse

CHAPTER I.

HE ASKED FOR IT.

THEY met on the foredeck of the ship just after the pilot had been dropped astern in his gig and the muddy sweep of the river was giving way to the blue plains of the China Sea. Back along the river, in the mud-walled and old, evil city which the ship had left, there was the throb and crash of concerted rifle firing now, and the high hammering of machine-guns.

Where those two stood, facing each other on the deck, sound carried, and their words were undertoned by it. Their concentration and the fixity of their thought was for each other, and, as they halted, both of them knew that.



James Towne, the master of the ship, was the one who spoke. He stood with his feet spread, his weight balanced like a boxer, and asked, almost quietly, "How the hell did you get here?"

The man before him, his brother, Larry Towne, was sick with the fever and days and nights of marching, fighting without sleep and with little or no food. But he still possessed the powers of laughter, and laughed now, his haggard, handsome head tilted back, his red-rimmed eyes narrow beneath the cracked brim of his straw coolie hat. He half turned and made a little gesture with his hand towards the fo'c's'le-head where the mate and the bosun's gang were securing the

land gear and tightening the devil's claw on the anchor cable at the capstan. "Snap at your chief mate, Skipper. Not at me. He's the guy who hired me, and signed me on your articles. It seems, for a packet of this size, you've been working out here kind of short-handed. But I'm glad to see you, fella; and how are you?"

His brother had come directly to the ship from the consul's office where, at the last moment, a very nervous consular staff had given him his clearance papers and then rushed to shut and barricade the windows and doors of the building against the oncoming

rabble army. But, meticulously, upon his bridge, he had changed from his shore-going clothes before he came forth to meet the native pilot, wore now a spotless white drill uniform with the four gold lace stripes of his command and above his long, lean face his watch cap with the oak-leaved visor.

Gradually, in this instant he tugged the cap visor down a bit, as though against the slanted rays of the scorching sun. But he could not restrain all of the trembling of the rage which ran through his body and his hands, and he took his fingers down, slid them into a side pocket. "I don't think you understand," he said in a careful voice. "I'm the master of this ship; I command her and I'm responsible for everything in her. You'd better tell me now how you got aboard here, Larry. And make that quick; we've got no spare time in this ship."

The other had come aft from the fo'c's'le-head at the bosun's order to pick up a pair of heaving lines, held them in his hands now. With an easy movement he flung them to the hatch beside him, stood with his hands free. "Aye, aye, sir," he said but with his eyes mocking, that fragment of a smile pulling at a corner of his mouth. "I can make it quick. Just let's call it necessity: I needed a job and I needed to get out of that town and out of China in a hurry. So I went around and saw your pal, the consul. See, I still consider myself an American, and a Down-East Maine boy at heart. I struck up the consul for a job. That guy didn't believe me, or maybe he didn't want to; anyhow, he had me kicked right out in the street. But while I was there I heard your ship was in, that a couple of your deckhands had skipped out on you and

hopped over to the Orient-Mail liner that pulled out yesterday.

"The rest was pretty easy. You were ashore, but I had my old third mate's ticket and some discharges in my money belt, and your chief mate signed me on. But, don't blame him; blame me. We're not the only Townes from Maine—you and I—and there are lots of guys by the name shipping to sea."

FORWARD on the fo'c's'le-head of the big freighter some of the sailors in the bosun's gang had slacked at their work of stowing hawsers and were staring down curiously at them there by the hatch. James Towne's head swung, and his eyes came from his brother's face; his voice struck sharply along the deck:

"I want none of that, bosun! Keep them at it there, *pronto!* When that's done, get aft and get those hatchboards on! Snap it up!"

Then, swiftly, his right hand swung up from his side and his powerful, long fingers caught tight at the flesh and muscle of his brother's shoulder inside the ragged and filthied khaki tunic the other wore.

"You," he said, "can laugh. But you were a tin-can general in that outlaw army which came in and looted the town four days ago. The other outfit which is coming in now may not be a great deal better, but it's made up of regulars, and it represents the government, and the government wants you. They've put a price on your head through all of South China. You're the bird they call Cheng Lung. The 'White General,' the man who'll fight for any price, for any man."

"Yeah," the man before him said, tilting a little on his heels beneath the fierce heat of the high sun. "That's

right. I admit to all that. But what the hell is that to you?"

James Towne looked back for an instant toward the yellow spread of the river waters, and beyond, at the city where, like the blossoming of strange flowers, shrapnel bursts lifted against the sky. Then he cursed, but in a low voice, mildly. "Back there," he said, "after the rats you fought with last had been chased out, the others would have put you against a wall and shot you, or dropped your head off with an axe into a basket. But I can't turn back there, and you know that. I've got to keep you with the ship now. Although any port where I enter along the China coast would hold me and the ship; the government would fine me and impound the ship for all they thought the company could stand. Because you're my brother, and you're signed on my ship's articles under your own name, and they'd say I'd helped you, a renegade outlaw, to escape justice. And my orders, the cargo I'm carrying for the company now, call for two other ports on this coast. Can you laugh at that?"

"No," Larry Towne said slowly, finding the words blurred and indistinct in his own ears, "not that . . ." He moved his feet and his body, feeling the flame of the fever and the flame of his hunger lifting inside him until his brain and his eyes ached with the pain of it. Then an old image, one he had kept secret and deeply hidden in the rear of his brain during these last strange, bitter and confused years, came clear to him, and he saw the old and low-built, white Maine house behind its wall of elms and maples along the deep sea inlet where he and this man before him, his brother, had been born and raised and started from.

Now he found that he was forced to

speak of that; the words came from him quite involuntarily:

"But I reckoned you were my brother, Jim; that, after all, you were a Maine man, too. They had me, back there; you put it right—when those other boys got in, they'd ha' had me up against a wall, or my head in the basket. But believe me, will you? I never figured on this other thing, about getting you in a jam with your company, or the people in the ports. I've been away from all this for a long time now, and, anyhow, I had to come . . ."

ODDLY, the tall, straight man, James Towne, laughed. "Sure," he said. "That's it. . . . You always 'had to.' That was true when you were a kid in school, and you let your lessons pile up until just before exam' time, and then brought them to me to help pull you through.

"That's why you quit the sea when you were already riding third mate and doing fine; you found some gal in New York you fell in love with and thought you wanted to marry—so you had to jump your ship and find a shore job with more money. But then you figured New York and a shore job and marriage was no life for you, and you pulled out from under that, and came to me for money again."

"But that was the last time," the other said in a hoarse, dragging voice. "You swore it was the last time you'd haul me out of the hole, and that if I came to you again you'd beat my ears in. And I told you that you couldn't if you wanted to; remember that?"

"Yeah," the other said. "Because you asked dough from me to get to France and join the Foreign Legion. You said that was where you belonged and where you wanted to stay, in a place where a man could find action

and excitement and a chance for quick promotion all the time. What happened to that, the Legion?"

For a moment in silence, Larry Towne looked at him, knowing the words he had found to say in his spinning brain, but somehow unwilling to say them now. But the expression of his brother's eyes and mouth, the hard, open contempt there in his face, brought a rage leaping in him which was fed and heightened by that flame of his hunger and weariness. "I went with the Legion," he said. "I did nearly five years there, and I was a senior sergeant when they invalided me out in Syria because of wounds. But I remembered what you said, and I never wanted to put you to that, Jim.

"So I stayed away from any place where I ever thought I'd meet you. I've been in Arabia since then, and Persia, and the back of Manchuria and China, wherever a man who wanted a soldier could pay me what I thought I was worth. But, you know about some of that; you've heard the 'white general' moniker, and the rest. So let's forget that, or save it.

"You've gone one way; you've stuck to the safe side, to one company and one job, and you're a skipper now, and, just for a little while—until I can get to hell out of here—I'm signed on in your ship as one of your crew. But when do you put out around here; when's chow? Maybe I am a bum sailor, but I'll be a whole lot better when I've had a slug of chow and some sleep."

James Towne did not smile; he brought a hand from his side and pointed to the coiled heaving lines the other had dropped on the forward hatch. "All hands," he said almost softly, "turn to and work in this ship

before they're fed. That's a ship's rule—my rule—and a company rule behind that. So get going; take those lines for'd to the peak, then turn to aft with the bosun's gang. You asked for it, and now you're going to get it. You're lucky to be able to eat at all; you're lucky to be alive. Turn to!"

His brother was barefoot; he made little or no sound across the deck-plates as he started to move aft and towards the crew's quarters, the heaving lines untouched on the hatch. "Later," he said back over his shoulder. "But right now I can smell chow cooking in that galley."

James Towne reached him with a stride. He stopped and jerked him around with a single motion of his arm. "I'll repeat that once," he said low-voiced. "Turn to!"

Beneath the other's hand, Larry Towne shrugged his shoulder loose. "I don't want to laugh," he said. "But you'll have to call your bosun or your mate, and have them beat the head off me before I'll do that. Chow is what I want, and you'll have to feed me, even in the brig."

THERE were footsteps along the deck from the 'midships passageway where the bosun and his gang under the watchful eyes of the mate were carrying forward gear to be stowed in the bow peak. But those men stopped shuffling just forward of the passageway, the knot of sailors staring and grinning, the bosun and the heavily built mate with their mouths set hard.

Then the mate came on, rubbing his hands down against the sides of the dungaree trousers he wore below his uniform jacket. But James Towne spoke to him, slipping loose the buttons of his starched jacket and putting it

in the mate's hands. "I'll take care of this, mister," he said. "If more of it's needed later, just remember how this was done..." And then he swung and struck.

The first blow caught Larry Towne's lifted shoulder. The second met the side of his head just below the jaw bone, spun him around and slipping to the deck. He got up slowly from there; he did not seem to hear what his brother or the bow-legged mate said in warning and in question. Then he came forward along the deck plates, his eyes all but shut, his mouth a kind of grayish, twisted line, the only color in his face the red welt that second blow had placed there. But his brother backed gradually from him now; he said that all he, Larry Towne, had to do was turn to and work, finish what had been commanded of him.

Then he found his brother's body within his reach, and jolted the fever-clumsy blows at him. Dully, he felt the impact of his own blows up through his arms and body, and in the gray gathering of fog about his brain felt again the seared pain and shock of James Towne's blows.

When he fell, he was not aware of it until he opened his eyes and saw the rivet-heads of the deck plates before him, and lifted his head up, looked into his brother's face. But his head was clear now, and through the pain he found dim, hoarse laughter, remembering that he and this man who stood above him had fought many times in their lives, from the time he had been five years old and James Towne seven.

And in all those fights he had won. Jimmy Towne had always been the one to ask for quits. Even his mother and his father, the Captain, had known that. He was the fighter in the family, and Jimmy got and kept what he

wished only because of his patience, his willingness to wait, and try a thing again and again. "So," Larry Towne said, forcing the words up and out through the fog, "you're trying it again now. Well, wait..."

He shoved his hands against the oil-slick steel of the deck plates, he half-lifted himself to his knees. "Listen," he could hear his brother say, "listen, sailor, you asked for all of this..."

"Yeah!" he husked, standing, swaying, lurching forward to strike again. But he stumbled there, and reeled, and his brother's hand clamped at his shoulders, held him from falling. He cursed at him, at Jimmy Towne, with words which were blurs of sound, he clawed at the other's hands and arms to get away. Then the rush of the fog came back in his brain, and over his eyes, and he lay inert, his fists still clenched, his lips forming the choked words.

CHAPTER II.

TROUBLE EXPECTED.

A DIM light burned above him in the deck-head and several men sat near on the edges of their bunks when he came back into consciousness. They were the other sailors, the men he had met when he had first come into this ship, and he passed his blinking glance slowly across their watchful faces, grinned when one of them got up and pushed a tin cup slopping with water into his hand. "Thanks, sailor," he said when the cup was empty and he had put it down beside him below the bunk where he lay. "Were you up for'd there, when I got my lamps trimmed?"

"Ja," the sailor said. He was a big man with the deep chest and shoulders and the square, blond head of the Bal-

tic races. "I seen t'at, fellar. You vant to come eat now, I've save out a little chow fer you. Bosun, he's been aft twice, fer turn you to on vatch. Ain't much to eat, this ship, but little help a lot, hah?"

"Plenty," he said. He was down on the deck now and erect, his feet apart to the roll, heave and pitch of the ship through the slow China Sea rollers. Then he slid his fingers up, along his jaws and mouth, feeling his puffed lip and jaw. "The skipper," he said, the blond man's eyes upon him, "is a pretty smart lad with his hands. What is it in this one—lots of that, and lots of pulley-hauley, but short on the chow?"

"You call it right," the blond man said, shoving the mess-kid and a plate along the table to him. "But, bosun says you're brother wit' the skipper. You an' him real brothers?"

Larry Towne was helping himself to cold slumgullion and soup, answered swallowing. "We're brothers," he said; "yeah. But don't get it wrong, sailor; that's never made us pals."

The big blond man and the others across the fo'c's'le laughed at that. But then a man who sat in a corner with a wash-bucket between his knees lifted his twisted, pock-marked face and husked sharply, "There ain't a man in the ship who's friends with that guy; learn that now. Three good lads beat it away from this one back there up the river.

"Yeah, and maybe that's why he clumb your frame so quick; just so's there wouldn't be any false ideas fer us monkeys. Because, no matter what that guy is to you, or any guy, he lives fer just one thing—the company that owns and runs this packet. Even himself, that don't mean nothin', if it's the company. That's why he's got six

A.B. sailors in a four thousand ton ship, and why those boys jumped on the dock with half their pay back there. But you're that guy's brother, and you must ha' known them things. What ever brung you aboard as a fo'c's'le-hand?"

Larry Towne laughed, and tapped the mess-kid before him with his hand. "This," he said. "And more like it I never would've had, if I'd stuck along in that town. The guys who came into it just after we pulled out didn't like me much; they wouldn't even have fed me before they shot me. I wasn't asking any bargains when I came aboard here."

"Don't worry," the pock-marked man said, bending down to his bucket, "you won't be gettin' any, fella. Ask th' bosun..."

The hulking Russian bosun had come to stand in the doorway of the fo'c's'le, his after supper pipe between his teeth, the lavender-tinted dusk at his back. "You," he said jerking up a thumb from his belt at Larry Towne. "Lay for'd to the bridge. Mate says you got eight-to-twelve watch, and, if you can't steer, he'll teach you, like you was taught this afternoon. That kinda bilge don't go in this ship, savvy?"

"Savvy," Larry Towne said, up on his feet and taking the cigarette papers and tobacco sack the big, blond sailor had just thrust silently in his hand. "But I was asking for that this afternoon, as a special favor."

The bosun cocked his head and laughed before he turned away. But at the ladder foot leading up to the main deck he swung and came back. "Listen," he said harshly, "maybe you think bein' the Old Man's brother might do you some good in this ship. But, when you feel like that again, try me, sailor; I'll pin yer ears back solid."

"No," Larry Towne told him, poised against the high door sill and inhaling his cigarette deeply before he flung it away to go forward to the bridge. "I'm saving that for one guy."

"You mean the Old Man?" the bosun said, his heavy lips slightly parted. "Fella, he'll break you into little bits, just like that. This ain't no Chinese army fer you any more, grab holt and savvy that right away."

But then the skinny, haggard, bare-foot man was by him and up the ladder, and only his soft voice came back. "I'm learning that," it said. "But, so is the skipper. And that's one for you to savvy . . ."

THE young third mate was on the wheel when Larry Towne came across the dark bridge and into the wheel-house. "Take this," he said curtly, stepping back, one hand still against the spokes. "Hold her as she goes, on 198, and keep her there. Can you steer?"

Silently, Larry Towne nodded at him, stepping up onto the mat-covered grating, sliding the spoke grips into his hands, the soft upflow of light from under the compass card across his face. The third mate stood forward of him, staring, watching, for a time, and then picked up his night glasses from off the shelf, went out to the shadows of the bridge wing.

The laden ship rode easily through the night. Stars were up now, and the first of what Larry Towne knew to be a full moon lay like a gleaming blade along the far horizon.

The familiar motion, the old sweep and swing of a ship at sea at night, this familiar work which he had learned when he had still been wearing short pants in the coastwise Maine schooners,

had all but lulled him into a mood of quietness, of peace, when he heard sharp footsteps up the steel rungs of the bridge ladder from below, and knew that his brother was there.

James Towne stepped slowly over the sill from the bridge. In his hands he carried a sheaf of radio message flimsies he had just got from the operator, and he was halfway to the chartroom door behind the wheel when he stopped. Then he pushed the papers he held down into a pocket of his jacket, came forward to the wheel. "So you can remember," he said in a voice which held no emotion and no expression.

"I can remember a lot of things," his brother said. "But what do you mean—this afternoon?"

James Towne let a corner of his mouth come back, and his eyes were very dark in the vague binnacle light. "That's one thing you'd better not forget, for your own damn' good. I run this ship; learn that now and for keeps. But I'm keeping you aboard here now; I'm taking you on South, with the ship.

"I just talked to the agents in Shanghai; I had to tell them what the hell happened, that you were aboard, and what that would mean if we came into any China Coast port during the next few weeks. I guess you were born lucky, and that it's never really run out on you, or you wouldn't be here now."

Larry Towne canted his head up above the wheel spokes. "You're telling me," he said hoarsely.

"Yeah," James Towne said, "that's it; I'm telling you. Because you stand in the luck now. The agents were able to find another port of call; we're bound for the Moluccas now, down in the Celebes Sea, and then for the China

ports. We're going to pick up a thousand tons of copra there; it'll be a month, or six weeks, before I bring you back to China. Maybe you can slide out, into some other place where they don't know you for what you are, when we hit the China coast again."

"Aren't you being too good?" his brother asked, leaning on the wheel, his eyes slanted in the beginning of a smile. "How about just piling me ashore on the beach in the Moluccas?"

The rage James Towne could not keep back made his voice harshly vibrant. "There's only one white man at Niakhané, the place we're bound for. He's the Dutchman in charge of the plantation there, and he'd shoot you rather than have you around, after I've talked with him. You don't get off as easy as that; you signed my ship's articles and you're going to work them out to the end of the voyage. After that, you can do your own running again. Now, you work."

Larry Towne drew his head up and his shoulders back in a complete imitation of the perfect sailor except for the quirking line of the bitter grin at the corners of his mouth. "Aye, aye, sir," he said, but then behind him on the bulkhead the brass-rimmed clock struck softly and he reached overhead for the bell lanyard, snapped it down, and when he looked around again his brother was gone and he was alone there, the dregs of his laughter held in his throat.

THEY came through days and nights of sheer blue and gold south from the China coast to that island of Niakhané. It rose for them one morning, a stark emerald shadow, right out of the unflawed turquoise of the sea, an ancient volcanic cone whose lower slopes were formed

of coral and thrust forth narrowly embracing arms, the reefs which guarded the sole entrance to the island. For Larry Towne, squatted aft on the poop under the awning with the big, blond sailor, Hansig, and the pock-marked man, Kort, it was like a dream after his years of the windswept, dusty plains and festering cities of China.

He stood to his feet and smiled now, his hard hands out upon the poop rail, his eyes intent over that loveliness of lush green growth.

"Looks good t' you, huh, guy?" little Kort asked, squinting up at him. "Better than that wall they would ha' put you against back in 'China?"

"A lot," he said quietly. He had done well during those days of their Southing; his face and his arms and torso had filled out with the regular, hard work and coarse food. The ragged and filthied clothes he had worn when he came aboard in that river port had been changed for clean new dungarees and a singlet he had drawn from the ship's slopchest against his pay. "But our pal, the skipper, is taking his time getting in here; it's a tough entrance, and no place to be caught."

"Don't worry!" Kort said, and spat. "He'll be havin' us up heavin' the lead or over the side in the small boats soundin' from there. It's like I told you before, guy; the ship and th' company come first in that swab's life. Listen, there's the bloody bosun, whip-pin' at his whistle now . . ."

They toiled through nearly all the rest of the daylight hours getting the ship in through the reefs, hauling her head laboriously by her anchors, backing and turning time and again, the men with the sounding leads sopped with sweat from head to foot.

But even then James Towne brought her only a bit more than halfway

through the tortuous and shoaled passage. There was something about this, he told the mate low-voiced on the bridge, that he did not like. "Snap down on that whistle again," he told the mate. "That Dutchman who's the local agent in here is supposed to guide the ships in himself; he cons them in with a deep-sea ketch he's got."

"Maybe the damn' Dutchman's drunk, er dead," the mate said, stepping heavily in his weariness back to the brass whistle handle, shoving it down and letting the long, braying blasts beat off the thickly jungled slopes and the close ellipse of the bay beyond.

They could see the plantation beyond there, at the tapering end of the bay, the nodding, plumed heads of the coco palms, the tin-roofed houses of the agent's quarters and store.

But there was no sound in that place except the dulling reverberations of the whistle, and no movement except that of the bright-hued birds that darted out from the jungle trees across the colored coral. The stout, white-hulled ketch James Towne had spoken of lay at her buoy a few yards beyond the crude pier, but her sails were furled and snugged down, no man moved aboard her, and no man could be seen. Slowly, James Towne cursed. "Break out a flag-hoist," he told the mate. "Tell that guy I want him out here right away. This is his job, not mine."

"If he's there," the mate said, but muttering, and turning away towards the flag-locker in the wheelroom.

The mate had made up and sent aloft on the bridge halyards several decidedly emphatic flag-hoists in the International Code before James Towne told him to stop. "O.K.," he said. "Haul 'em down. Enough of that; I'm going ashore."

The mate wiped sweat from his cap

band and blinked his eyes. "I dunno," he said. "But ain't that an awful flock of *praus*, them native boats, hauled up there on the beach?"

James Towne stared with him, then laughed shortly. "You're a suspicious swab," he said. "Vlecken, this Dutchman, has got a high-power radio ashore there; he'd hop right on that at the first sign of trouble. And he recruits a lot of his labor from the other islands around here; I heard that about him when we were into Ternate last year. Don't forget we've got a thousand tons to load here and in a hurry. He probably sent out to the other islands for extra labor."

"Yeah," the mate said, "but take a couple of guns along with you when you go ashore, will you, Mister? It wouldn't be the first time in one o' these islands th' Malays got back on their heels and rubbed out some white man; you know that . . ."

"So," James Towne said, his eyes still on the shore. Then he took a key out from his pocket and put it in the mate's hand. "Break out a revolver and four of those Winchesters from the locker in my room. Then get the light boat outboarded. I'll want six men in that boat; see that Larry Towne is among 'em."

"The big fighting man, you mean?" the mate asked, grinning.

"You know who I mean!" James Towne snapped at him. "Get below!"

CHAPTER III.

SHORE PARTY.

LARRY TOWNE held the bow oar in that boat which started ashore. Kort, the pock-marked man, and Hansig, the Finn, were aft of him, their backs bowed to their work, and in the

stern-sheets James Towne sat quietly, his feet spread to accommodate the pile of rifles and ammunition boxes the mate had put there, his elbows akimbo as he handled the steering lines. Coming down the side of the ship as they had been lowered away from on deck, Kort had spoken once and asked something in his growling voice about this unexpected pleasure, but James Towne had cursed him swiftly from the stern-sheets, said that the next man who spoke would be logged a month's pay and do a week in the brig on bread and water.

They had been silent after that, the sounds there the swish and drip of the oar blades, the small murmuring the boat made through the azure water, and the deep, tensed panting of their breathing.

Those six men at the oars faced aft, and the end of the bay, the place they were going, was at their backs and out of their sight.

All they could do as they lifted and swung the long oars creaking in the row-locks was gaze into James Towne's eyes, watch his browned, hard face. But he was expressionless even when he told them to 'vast heaving on the oars and slack headway.

Then he reached down to the floor-boards at his feet and lifted up one of the stocky Winchester rifles. "You, bow oar," he said to Larry Towne, holding the rifle and an ammunition box out, "take this. You other birds, sit ready there . . ."

Then the boomed crash of the guns fired on the shore broke right across the last of his words. He ducked there, involuntarily pulled his head down where he sat, and two of the sailors forward of him slid tangling and cursing down under the thwarts to the floor-boards. But Larry Towne was

laughing hoarsely where he stood balanced 'midships, the Winchester lifted as he levered a bullet into the breech. "Come on," he said; he was cuddling the Winchester stock in against his shoulder. "Those guys are only shooting buckshot, and they don't know how to handle that. I guess all the Dutchman had in the place was bird guns . . ." Then he brought his trigger slowly back and the men on the thwarts about him raised their heads narrowly gazing.

Small and yellow men who wore the garish *sarongs* and twisted headcloths of the island Malays, had come out from the shadows of the godown and the copra drying sheds and ventured to stand along the pier and the beach. One of those, a man who swung a double-barreled shotgun above his head, Larry Towne caught with a shot fired at a little more than three hundred yards. The Malay's knees sagged, and his shoulders; he tipped on the edge of the pier, swinging the shotgun in his hands laxly. Then, splashing, it fell into the shallow water below and he fell after it, face-foremost and stiffly.

But the others there upon the pier and the white sand of the beach where the big, high-bowed *praus* were hauled up, wheeled and ran. They were gone instantly and almost mysteriously from all sight.

Across the heads of the men in the boat, Larry Towne looked aft at his brother. "You're the skipper of that ship back there," he said. "You're handling this boat. But only a plain damn' fool would go in that place now. Those babies don't know much about the shotguns they've grabbed, but a lot of them have got blow-guns. Close-up, they can make a pretty nasty piece of news."

FOR what was several seconds James Towne sat in silence. Then he lowered to the floor-boards the rifle he had taken. "Get your oars in the water," he said, to all of them. "Bring her around — back to the ship!"

The mate and nearly every man in the crew were there when they brought the boat aboard. "So I was right?" the mate husked at James Towne. "Them little yella fellas knocked the Dutchman off?"

"You were right enough," James Towne said, then let his glance go from man to man in the group. "But we're staying here tonight; I'm not going to take this ship out in the dark."

With a jerking motion the mate tipped his cap back off his forehead. His little, close-set eyes widened as he gazed off at the deep jungle slopes sweeping back beyond, and the coral reefs which were not more than fifty yards away on each side of the ship. "You think, Mister," he asked, "that them yella guys will let us stay like this?"

James Towne had let his gaze follow that of the mate along the jungle and the narrow arms of the reefs. "We'll see," he said flatly. "I don't know. But our copra's in there on that pier, and we can't work the ship out of here tonight. I'll want a guard here on deck, all night long. Men who won't shoot each other or themselves, and who'll be worth something if those guys do try to come aboard. Pick a watch for yourself, mate; I'll pick another."

"Aye, sir," the mate said, the corners of his mouth pulled down, his eyes obliquely upon Larry Towne. "But do you want him yourself, yer brother, the Chinaboy fighting man, and the guy who got us into all this?"

James Towne had been waiting for that for some time, or for words like it; he caught the mate sharply by the arm and dragged him close. "Stow tht bilge!" he said. "Draw your men!"

All of them there had heard what the mate said, and in the rear of the crowd several of the firemen and oilers barked back short phrases at him, squinting around where Larry Towne stood aside and alone. "That's it," the mate said, anger and confidence grown strong in him now. "If it wasn't for the skipper's gay brother, we'd be lyin' in snug against the bund at Shanghai. Now we got this, here, an' typhoon time coming outside. How's that for fun?"

"Not much." It was Larry Towne who spoke, shouldering quietly through the crowd. "But you've got to wait for yours. I'm having mine now." He stood right before the mate as he said that last sentence, between him and James Towne, but the mate, although he swallowed hard and deep lines corrugated his sweaty forehead, chose to say nothing, and the thin, darkly tanned man smiled, swung to face his brother and the captain of the ship.

"I don't know about you," he said to James Towne, "but the rest of these jaspers seem to be making a pretty tough thing out of this. They're figuring wrong, though; those guys ashore aren't going to break out with any hell unless we let 'em. There isn't one of them who'd try to swarm up over the side of this ship tonight, not if you keep a sharp lookout and your bridge searchlight going. Ashore, maybe, they're something else, but not if the right man gets after them."

"You hey?" the mate ventured at his shoulder.

Larry Towne laughed at the mate.

"Yeah," he said, "me." But his glance remained upon James Towne's face, and when he spoke again it was to that man:

"You're in a spot here, sure, and perhaps I'm the guy who put you all in it, one way or another. But I'm willing to try to get you out of it, and see you get your lousy copra out of here, and your ship away before typhoon time. I want to go on the beach right now, with any guys from here who want to go with me, and get the birds who must have knocked off that Dutchman.

"And I figure I've got a pretty good chance ashore; those Malays will reckon that if they haven't got the guts to come out and attack the ship during the night, we certainly haven't got what it takes to go in and jump them. So, any way you play it, you can't be losing much, skipper. All I want is that Winchester I had this afternoon, and a hundred rounds for it, and a hand flashlight. That's all your gamble—unless some of these other lads want to go overside with me."

BIG Hansig, the Finn, was out through the crowd then, sweeping the other men back from him with both vast, hairy arms, and at Larry Towne's side before the captain could speak. "W'at t'e haill you t'ink?" he grunted at Larry Towne. "I'm gonna stay 'longside t'is bunch o' dock-rats v'ilst you pile ashore alone. You count me, Cap'n, 'long vit' him."

But James Towne stood silent still, calm now, almost smiling as he waited. One by one, bashfully or noisily cursing, four other men came forward in the next couple of minutes, Kort, the pock-marked man, among them. All of them, James Towne reflected, check-

ing them off in his mind, had been with his brother in the boat this afternoon and had seen him kill that Malay marauder with a snapshot at long range.

They were also, all of them, men he had picked up on the beach in one Oriental port or another during the last year, sailors who had left their former ships wilfully or drunkenly, seeking some vague thing beyond the monotony of ordinary ship's duty and existence.

The type, he told himself, that his brother represented, with all its weaknesses and bitterly dimmed but still persistent hopes. Then he spoke to them, to his brother for them:

"Right. You asked for it. Those guns we had in the boat are yours. The boat is yours, and what else is in her. But remember when you push off from here that from then on the show is in your hands. There won't be anything we can do for you until daylight tomorrow, if then. That understood?"

His brother just nodded to him, starting back to where the light boat lay inboarded again in the gallows, Hansig, Kort and the rest trooping after him wordlessly. They worked there for a bit at the boat, following the soft orders of Larry Towne and straightening out her gear, putting strips of greased canvas about the oar shafts where they met the row-locks, oiling the locks themselves against any possibility of sound.

For a time, the rest of the crew had stood about and watched them, even jeered them a bit, but the cook had rung his bell at the galley door, and those others had gone away to the messrooms, and he, James Towne, stood alone there on the deck watching them. The evening star was a soft flake of pure gold against the far sky

in the rapid descent of the dusk as they had started to work, and it was dark night now as they finished and Larry Towne gave them the low order to swing the boat out.

James Towne went forward then, prompted by an emotion and a desire he did not clearly understand. He almost held his hand out to his brother, but then thought better of it, just nodded to him and all the others instead, said soberly, "Good luck there, sailors. If you get set right tonight let us know, will you? Send up one of those flares in he boat."

"We'll do that, when we're set," his brother said; he sat in the stern-sheets, in the same position he had occupied this afternoon, the pile of rifles and ammunition at his feet. His head was forward, he faced the men in the boat who handled the fall lines. "Slack off," he said to them. "Don't mind the spectators. Let's get going."

The boat went gradually and without sound down the ship's side, met the water with a slight clack and creak of gear as the fall tackle was cast loose and oars put out. Then the blackness, the limitless immensity of the tropical night, swallowed it up and it was gone, soundless and trackless. James Towne straightened from where he had bent over the 'midships rail above, finding that his hands ached from their unconsciously tight clamping, and that behind him the mate stood with a toothpick between his teeth. "That suicide party off O.K.?" the mate asked him, making the toothpick bob up and down.

James Towne cursed him in a level, unbroken voice. "If they lose," he said, "we lose, you fur-eared lunk. Tumble to that right now. And beat it topside and get that searchlight going, but not close in, along the beach here on either side. Keep it high and out

for a while, along the end of the bay. Those birds need all the breaks they can get."

The mate gaped at him, the toothpick slipping to the deck unnoticed. "Mister," he croaked, "you ain't silly enough to hold with the idea you should ha' gone along with that wild outfit?"

"I don't know," James Towne muttered before he turned forward to the saloon and his cold supper.

CHAPTER IV.

WHO IS IN COMMAND?

THE rocket signal James Towne had awaited all night long broke perhaps twenty minutes before dawn. The fiery, spitting swath of it lashed high up through the graying darkness above the coco palms of the plantation, plunged down through the mists across the bay and was gone.

There was no other warning, no shouts or shots or sound of movement: just that flickered sweep and descent through the mists. But James Towne was ready and had kept the picked men of his ship's crew alert and waiting since shortly after midnight.

The big, two-cylindere motor-sailer was already overside at a boat boom the bosun had rigged grumbling and expecting attack any minute. The chief engineer, full of hot coffee and rum, and slightly more frightened than he wished to admit, sat on the thwart before the flywheel, his carburetor primed.

James Towne and the eight men he had chosen just slid down ladders and lines from the boat boom, the chief engineer kicked the flywheel over and they were surging forward, away from the ship's side and into the pearl-cast

mist wreaths towards the dark, blank shore beyond.

Gun flame tore carmine and blue gashes along the beach and the big copra sheds as James Towne helmed the motor-sailer in past the Dutchman's anchored ketch and swung the tiller over to bring his bow gently against the pier end. Then, the chief grunting and cursing at his shoulder, the others behind thumping in a tight group, he led them on and to the godown. That was empty of all but the stacked copra, they found, storming in, their variously assorted weapons, cleavers borrowed from the galley, Stillson wrenches from the engine-room stores, and boat-hooks, held out and high before them. The fight was beyond and had just actually begun.

They came upon it as they burst through the further door of the godown and to the end of the pier. The slant-eyed Malay men had been caught unwarned except for that flash of the signal rocket up from the dense bush bordering the plantation. Then, heavy with sleep and surprise, they had swung down from the smashed litter they had made of the Dutch agent's bungalow.

There, at the strip of lawn below, they met the men who had outwitted them and trapped them here. But they had nothing but their wave-bladed krisses and the strange, clumsy guns they had taken from the Dutchman when they had come upon him from behind and killed him in his bungalow yesterday noon. And these, the silent, steadily moving white men before them, had guns that struck more swiftly, and killed when they struck.

The Malays were Mahometans. Their warriors' creed was death in battle before anything else. But they could not stand before those guns, and now other men, white men, had come

thundering out of the godown and from the pier at their backs. They wheeled, bunching together behind their chief, and started for that second group of men and the open jungle which lay beyond.

So, Larry Towne and the men with him came upon them and killed them from behind, shot them at pointblank range, hewed them down with their empty rifles held like clubs, or their own krisses plucked from the killed.

The brothers met beside the trampled flower bed the Dutchman had planted in old five gallon kerosene tins before his veranda. Panting, still taut with combat, they looked into each other's eyes. Larry Towne was the one to speak, sliding the dead Malay chief's pearl-handled kris down through his belt:

"Some of those monkeys got away; maybe a dozen of them. But tell your guys not to chase after them; they'll get knocked off sure as hell in the bush. We'll take care of them, later. But, you fooled me, fella; I never figured to see you here during the show, or even soon after it."

"I know you didn't," James Towne said, the lines of his mouth tightly drawn. "But let's go in, and see what happened to the Dutchman."

VLECKEN, the Dutch plantation agent, had been killed seated in his chair before his big radio set. His round, pink head was forward on his hands as though he sat in sleep; there was only that small, thorn-like poison dart between his shoulder blades to show he had died.

"Knew it was coming," Larry Towne said, and touched the pistol that was still under one of the man's hands. "But a lot of guys have known that, without it doing them any good."

Behind them, the big, sparsely furnished room was a complete wreck, strewn with broken bottles, opened tins and scraps of uneaten food the Malay coolies had ripped from the Dutchman's stores. Larry Towne kicked a full whiskey bottle with his foot, sent it spinning into a corner of the room.

"The same old story," he said harshly. "Any one man trusting another man, or set of men, too far. Those yellow boys probably came from the back of the island and worked for that poor guy in peace for years. Now, there he is. But we're going to fix that, the guys who came with me, right away. That's going to be our real fun."

"What do you mean?" James Towne stood before the door out to the veranda and blocking it with his wide shoulders. "Who gave the orders for that?"

"I did."

James Towne smiled bleakly at him. "Take a look at the Dutchman's barometer over there on the wall," he said. "Or put the earphones on at his radio. There's typhoon making up south of here and bound this way fast. My operator on the ship was bringing in reports of it all night long after you pushed off. We'll have to go like hell to get the copra off and loaded before I take the ship out of that trap in the reefs and run for it. All hands are going on that job, *pronto*. We've got what we came after, and we're damn' lucky, and I want to thank you for your whack in this. But now lay out there with the other guys and turn to; bring that ketch in alongside. We're going to load into that and anything that floats which we can slap hands on."

"Like hell," his brother said almost

mildly. "Do you think I and the guys who came with me took that chance last night, and dragged on our bellies in the bush for six hours, to go back now? We're bound over to that Malay village on the other side of the island where these guys came from. We found the trail, coming in here this morning, and we're going to clean that joint right down to the last hut."

"Go ahead—grab your copra—get your ship out of here. That's your job, and the company you've given eighteen years of your life to owns that ship."

"All we want is to be let alone now, and to have that Dutchman's ketch after you're gone. He's dead and won't be wanting it any more."

"I think," James Towne said slowly, sliding the revolver he held in one hand down into his belt, "that you didn't understand me, sailor. I just told you to turn to."

"Yeah, I heard that," Larry Towne answered, and whipped up a hooked left for his brother's jaw.

They rolled, locked in each other's arms, across the veranda and down its steps, stopped and broke and stood knee to knee right in among the men from the ship. Big Hansig let a hoarse growling sound go from his throat when he saw, and shoved the others back.

"Now," he grunted, "now ve have pay-day. Lay back, stupitts!"

They lay back, crouched, silent, staring. The brothers still stood knee to knee, hit and fought that way, insensible of anything or anybody else now, alive only to the fact of each other and the force, the power of the other man's hands. But James Towne was the man who gave in; he was driven and slammed back, knocked to his knees and his face by blows that slipped

through his guard and which he never saw.

HE got up off his knees and stood to meet his brother; he charged in at him, now methodically and slowly, with care and understanding of the other's full, fresh power. At one time, he drove the slimmer, smaller man several yards before him, had the wild, hot hope of victory, then saw the other's slitted eyes and mouth. His brother was smiling at him.

Larry Towne, the born fighting man, was asking him to come on. He did that; he walked on and in. And the man before him crossed a quick, evil left to his throat, struck again, heavily, with his right, again with the left.

James Towne went sidewise to his knees. He got slowly from there, and although he did not understand the words his brother said, shook his bloody head at him. Then he was on his feet, he could feel vaguely the ground under him, and see his brother's face and eyes level with his own. He tried to hit that face, missed, and caught with both his arms clinging at his brother's body. He husked words which came from down deep in him aloud to Larry Towne. "You're going to turn to," he said. "You're going out there and do your job. You hear me? Turn to! The ship—" Then his arms slackened and he reeled away and was free, tripped, went down, feeling the darkness which came from within rise up over his eyes.

He saw his brother's face first when that darkness had ebbed in retreat, and beyond, hard, wryly set, the faces of the other men who had left the ship with his brother last night. Hansig the Finn, the biggest and strongest man in the ship, was there, close to him, and Kort, the pock-marked man, was

behind, his mouth sagged open for a hoarse stream of laughter.

For a moment, James Towne turned from them; he crawled to the veranda steps and pulled himself upright there along the railing. Then, tottering, his feet weaving under him, he came back, to stand before Hansig and Kort. "You," he said to them, his voice a thick whisper. "You signed articles in that ship; you're sailors in her. You're going to do your duties now; you're going to load her, and get her fairly out to sea. Then—then—"

Hansig was laughing at him, bunching his great fists up from his hips. James Towne brought his own numbed hands from his sides; he took another stumbling step, trying to swing for Hansig's jaw. But another man was there before him, between him and Hansig; his brother, Larry Towne, had just struck the Finn sailor across the mouth, whipped him sprawling back through the other men, sent Kort tumbling after him.

In the pounding chamber of his brain, James Towne heard his brother's words slowly, indistinctly, as though a voice from far away and that of a man he did not know.

"He told you," that voice said. "Now I'm telling you. Turn to, you swabs! Get to it or I'll slap you flat! Don't you know that man's a sailor—and ten times more a man than you'll ever be? It's not his job out there he wants to save, or his ship. It's all that's behind it and everything that means. He's got the thing we haven't got, and what we lost a long time ago; he has what we'll never find without a guy like him to show us. He knows a man's got to give something before he gets something back. He savvies that any man sometimes has to listen and to obey somebody else. That's

what his job and his ship means to him; that's why he's sending you out there to work now. Because he's got a command, a trust, and that's his ship, which means his life . . ."

Larry Towne stopped and wiped a hand across his face. He let his slow, burning gaze pass to the faces of those shambling, nodding men there, then he smiled.

"Don't let *me* tell you that, though," he said. "He's man-size enough to prove it for himself, and I've just learned that now, for the first time in my life. But if any of you birds doubt him, or me, I'm here to back him up.

Get that; you wouldn't be bucking one guy. You'd be taking on brothers. So hit the deck; roll! Start that copra coming out!"

They were gone, out along the pier to the godown and to bring the ketch against the dock, when he spoke again, sliding his arm around his brother's shoulder and aiding him to walk straightly there. "Steady as she goes, skipper," he said, the smile gone now, but his glance steady, calm. "It's all yours now."

"Right, sailor," James Towne whispered back, his eyes turned, "yours and mine. . ."

THE END

The Longest Race

EVER since Magellan started it in 1519, attempts to circumnavigate the globe in a hurry have been made by adventurous men—and women. It took Magellan's expedition just 1,083 days, or nearly 3 years to make the round trip, and only one of his 5 ships returned to the starting place, Seville. Magellan himself didn't return home for the official welcome—he was killed in the Philippines.

Jules Verne caught the popular fancy with his tale of Phileas Fogg, who made a whirlwind trip around the world in 80 days in 1872. That was considered just another of Verne's fantastic notions at the time, yet in 1889 Nellie Bly turned the trick in 72 days.

From then on, as transportation facilities improved, the record was gradually whittled down. Chief of Police Charles Fitzmorris of Chicago did it in 60 days in 1901. Two years later J. Willis Sayre made it in 54 days, 9 hours, 42 minutes. In 1907, Colonel Burnlay-Campbell got around in 40 days, 19 hours and 30 minutes. John H. Mears cut the time down to 35 days, 21 hours, 36 minutes in 1913.

U. S. Army aviators, in 1924, circled the world in 14½ days of actual flying time—but their total elapsed time was 175 days. Linton Wells and Edward Evans, using planes, autos, trains and ships, made it in 24 days, 14 hours, 36 minutes in 1926. In 1929, the Graf Zeppelin, making several stopovers, went around in 20 days.

Then came Wiley Post and Harold Gatty, who cut the time to 8 days, 15 hours, 51 minutes, in their plane, the Winnie Mae, in 1931. Post, alone, did it in 7 days, 18 hours, 50 minutes in 1933, again in the Winnie Mae. It will probably take a stratosphere plane to beat that record.

—Herb Lewis.

MEN OF DARING
by STOOKIE ALLEN



Sergt.
Stanley Morgan

HE WAS BORN IN PAYSON, UTAH, IN 1901, ON A FARM. AT 19 HE ENLISTED IN THE ARMY, AND 7 YEARS AGO, WHEN THE SIGNAL CORPS ESTABLISHED A STATION AT POINT BARROW, SERGEANT MORGAN AND HIS WIFE WENT THERE. SINCE THEN MORGAN HAS SERVED AS CORPS WIRELESS OPERATOR AT THE STATION, AND AS THE U.S. WEATHER BUREAU'S REPORTER THERE. AS U.S. COMMISSIONER HE IS "THE LAW" NORTH OF THE



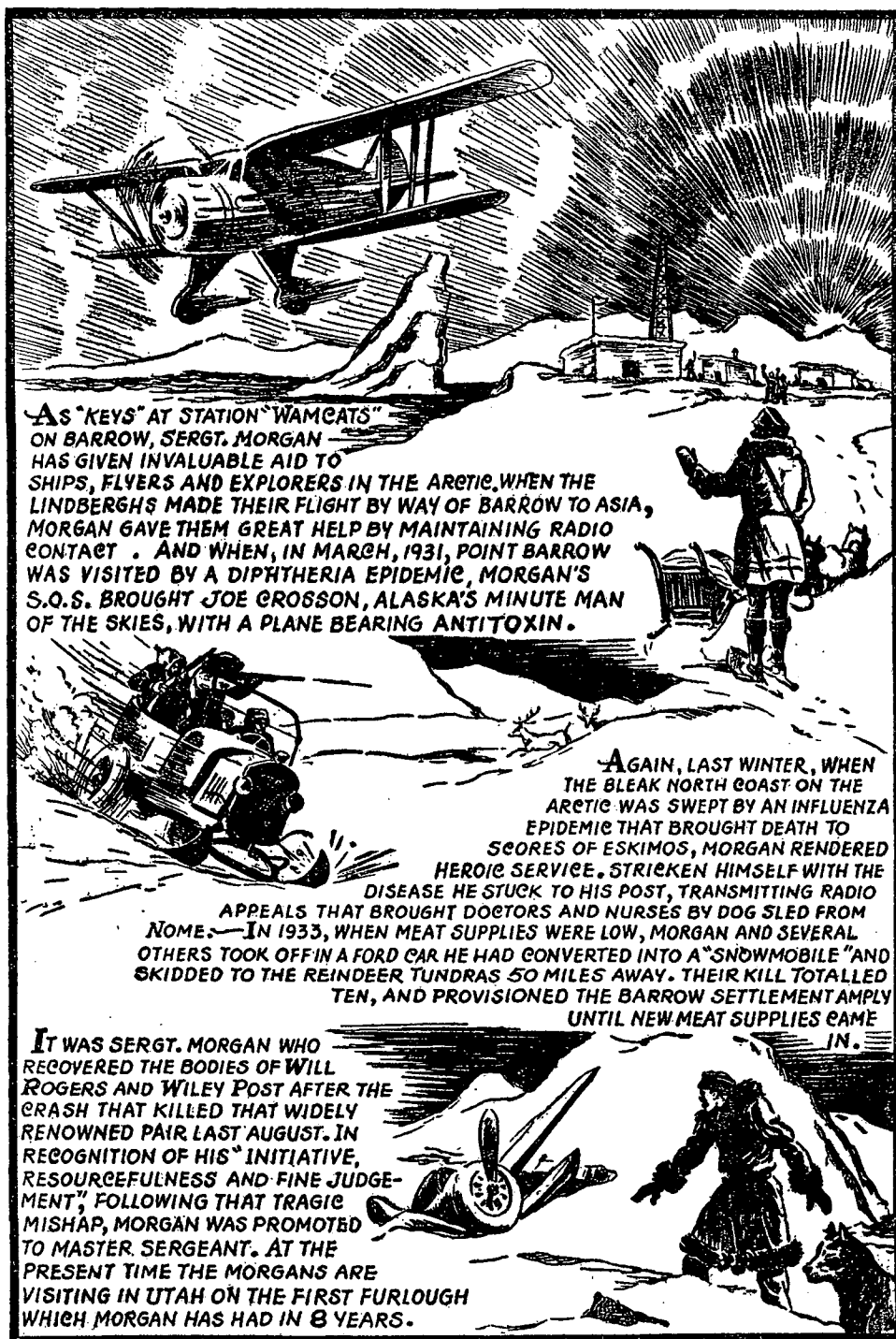
**UNCLE SAM'S MAN
AT POINT BARROW**

FRONTIERSMAN ON HIS COUNTRY'S LAST FRONTIER, SERGT. STANLEY R. MORGAN IS ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS IN THE U.S. ARMY, FOR WHENEVER HIS STATION AT THE NORTHERNMOST TIP OF AMERICA IS IN THE NEWS HE'S TRANSMITTING THE STORY OF THE EVENT—OR EVEN MAKING HISTORY HIMSELF.



71ST DEGREE. BESIDES THE MORGANS AND THEIR CHILDREN, THERE ARE ONLY 3 OTHER WHITE RESIDENTS IN THE SETTLEMENT. THE REST ARE ESKIMOS. AND THE ONLY OTHER WHITES SEEN IN THAT LONELY SPOT ARE WHALERS, TRADERS, TRAPPERS AND AN OCCASIONAL VISITOR VIA THE AIR LINE FROM FAIRBANKS.

A True Story in Pictures Every Week



AS "KEYS" AT STATION "WAMCATS" ON BARROW, SERGT. MORGAN HAS GIVEN INVALUABLE AID TO SHIPS, FLYERS AND EXPLORERS IN THE ARCTIC. WHEN THE LINDBERGH'S MADE THEIR FLIGHT BY WAY OF BARROW TO ASIA, MORGAN GAVE THEM GREAT HELP BY MAINTAINING RADIO CONTACT. AND WHEN, IN MARCH, 1931, POINT BARROW WAS VISITED BY A DIPHTHERIA EPIDEMIC, MORGAN'S S.O.S. BROUGHT JOE GROSSON, ALASKA'S MINUTE MAN OF THE SKIES, WITH A PLANE BEARING ANTITOXIN.

AGAIN, LAST WINTER, WHEN THE BLEAK NORTH COAST ON THE ARCTIC WAS SWEEPED BY AN INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC THAT BROUGHT DEATH TO SCORES OF ESKIMOS, MORGAN RENDERED HEROIC SERVICE. STRICKEN HIMSELF WITH THE DISEASE HE STUCK TO HIS POST, TRANSMITTING RADIO APPEALS THAT BROUGHT DOCTORS AND NURSES BY DOG SLED FROM NOME.—IN 1933, WHEN MEAT SUPPLIES WERE LOW, MORGAN AND SEVERAL OTHERS TOOK OFF IN A FORD CAR HE HAD CONVERTED INTO A "SNOWMOBILE" AND SKIDDED TO THE REINDEER TUNDRAS 50 MILES AWAY. THEIR KILL TOTALLED TEN, AND PROVISIONED THE BARROW SETTLEMENT AMPLY UNTIL NEW MEAT SUPPLIES CAME IN.

IT WAS SERGT. MORGAN WHO RECOVERED THE BODIES OF WILL ROGERS AND WILEY POST AFTER THE CRASH THAT KILLED THAT WIDELY RENOWNED PAIR LAST AUGUST. IN RECOGNITION OF HIS "INITIATIVE, RESOURCEFULNESS AND FINE JUDGEMENT," FOLLOWING THAT TRAGIC MISHAP, MORGAN WAS PROMOTED TO MASTER SERGEANT. AT THE PRESENT TIME THE MORGANS ARE VISITING IN UTAH ON THE FIRST FURLOUGH WHICH MORGAN HAS HAD IN 8 YEARS.

Next Week: Lt. Commander George O. Noville

*Ladderman Donovan knew the perils of fighting flames and smoke
—but fighting a murder charge was a danger he'd never faced before*



"Watch out for gas!"

Ladders Up!

By KARL DETZER

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WHEN Lieutenant Michael Donovan, stalwart commander of Ladder Truck No. 9, used his fists effectively on Alderman Fraley because the latter had propositioned him in regard to a scheme for graft, the young fireman realized that he was in store for trouble. And sure enough trouble was not long in coming.

Soon after Fraley had sworn "toget" Donovan, a serious fire broke out in the Ridgefield Building. Donovan goes up the ladder to rescue a man leaning from a flaming window—only to find that the man has disappeared and that Fraley is inside—sitting dead at a desk. Suddenly Donovan

finds himself being ordered at pistol-point to stand back, and a third, mysterious fellow with a foreign accent escapes from the building.

Not long after Senior Ladderman Hogan goes to rescue Donovan. And when Donovan, overcome by smoke and flames, is brought to the street, he is found with a revolver in his hand. He is booked on a first degree murder charge.

CHAPTER V.

ATTEMPTED MURDER.

IT was three weeks to the day between the Ridgefield building fire, with all its smoky horror, and that other blaze, which flared up mysteriously and swept in a single hour through John Langman's warehouse. They were weeks of doubt and pain,

This story began in the *Argosy* for December 28

of uncertainty and suspense and danger to Michael Donovan, and twice in those twenty-one days he again looked death in the eye.

The Langman fire, for all its strange behavior, was not immediately linked by Donovan or anyone else into that string of circumstances which began in the lieutenant's office above the apparatus room of Truck 9, that night Alderman Fraley called and offered him a bribe.

Now, with Fraley dead, Donovan lay on his back in the hospital with a cracked head, smoke-torn lungs, and worse by far, the charge of murder hanging over him. He lost ten pounds, and most of his color, and nearly all hope, that first week, flat on his back, with Sergeant Sullivan and two other officers sitting by, guarding him.

The charge against him was clear enough, even in the legal language of the warrant. It was murder, and first degree murder at that. Waking and sleeping, Donovan could not pry its accusation from his feverish, troubled thoughts.

He had shot Alderman Fraley, so the warrant charged; shot him with a deadly weapon, to wit, a .32 caliber revolver, of ownership unknown, and Alderman Fraley therefrom had died. There was a lot more to it, of course, about the deed being wilful and felonious, with malice aforethought, and unprovoked.

Hour after hour, the words burned into Donovan's mind. He would awaken, sweating cold, reliving the horror of that moment, far up in the smoky building, with the crazy man, lisping in his curious accent, and Fraley sitting dead, and the heat pounding up through the floor.

The policemen sat beside his bed, on their eight hour shifts of duty, and

chewed gum, and read the newspapers, and kept a wary eye upon Donovan between the lines of print.

On the third day, when his fever had begun to subside, Donovan was permitted his first visitor. It was Ladderman Hogan, in his best dress uniform, as carefully brushed and pressed as if he were attending a funeral. All he lacked, in fact, was a pair of white gloves and a sprig of forget-me-nots fastened to his badge. Even his expression was funereal as he walked slowly and silently into the room.

He stood silent a moment beside Donovan's bed, his long horsey face drawn even longer, his wide mouth pressed tight, and twiddled his blue cap in his fingers. At last he glanced at Sergeant Sullivan, of the State's attorney's office, who had leaned forward and was watching him with suspicious, unblinking eyes.

Hogan jabbed in the policeman's direction an angular thumb.

"Who's that comical looking guy?" he asked, his voice clear enough to be heard in the corridor.

Donovan answered, "It's my nursery maid. You've no idea, Hogan, how he looks after me."

"I don't like cops," said Ladderman Hogan. "I don't like the unpleasant odor of 'em."

"Nuts," said Sergeant Sullivan, and leaned back against the wall, still watching, but pretending not to listen.

Hogan turned his back on him. "I bring the respects of all the boys in the company, sir," he said to Donovan. "They all feel bad about what happened. They know what a habit cops have of picking up the wrong man."

"Picked up the right one this time?" Sullivan retorted, and began to chew gum rapidly.

"The boys on the truck company,

sir, they'd like nothing better than to burn down the police station and all the vermin in it."

Sullivan's face turned purple.

"What a fine and dandy bunch of communists must of got into the fire department," he remarked. "I'll have to make a report on this."

THEREAFTER, Hogan ignored him, and talked to Donovan as if the sergeant were only another piece of white hospital furniture. He had brought news, both good and bad. The papers were making a great deal of the murder, for one thing, and not one of them had taken the trouble to state that there was no proof, yet, that Donovan was the killer.

They'd got hold of the news, somehow, that Fraley and Donovan had quarreled bitterly when last they met, and that Donovan had threatened the alderman, and they made a great deal of that. Nothing was said, of course, of the reason for the quarrel; there was no mention of motion picture censorship, or a committee of aldermen's wives.

"The other news was less discouraging.

"The boys have took up a collection, sir, from the whole battalion," Hogan said.

"A collection for what?" Donovan asked.

"To buy you a lawyer with," the ladderman replied. "The best lawyer in the law business, sir. One of those lawyers who can make a fat-headed cop look even sillier than nature intended."

Sergeant Sullivan snorted, but held his tongue, and Donovan said:

"That's very decent of them, Hogan. Give 'em my thanks."

"The boss led off the list himself,

old Stonesifer did. With ten bucks. And it was him that picked the lawyer for you. Young fellow named Kelly, that's a relative of the Hanigans in the Eighth Ward. He'll be to see you this afternoon."

The floor supervisor came to the door, and said, "Your five minutes is up, sir," and Hogan left reluctantly, but not without a final jab at Sullivan.

"You'll never get better with that comic valentine looking at you," he said to Donovan. "I hope they put somebody in his place that isn't so disturbin' to a man's peace of mind."

The lawyer, Kelly, proved to be a pleasant enough young man and very earnest. He listened to Donovan's story from beginning to end, and remarked that it should not be difficult to secure bail, or even better, to have Donovan released to the custody of the chief of battalion.

"I'll look into the matter," he promised, and departed briskly.

Donovan did not feel like supper, and left his tray untouched. The interne came on his evening rounds at eight o'clock, and at nine Sergeant Sullivan was relieved from duty, and his place taken by a silent, middle-aged officer named Peck. For some reason, Donovan found him less objectionable than Sullivan.

He would say, "Good evening," when he entered the room, and when he left he would say, "See you later," and that was all. Each evening he pulled his chair across the floor, and sat just inside the door, where he could watch the corridor as well as the room. And he always shaded the lamp, instead of leaving it to glare brightly all the long night, to plague Donovan's smoke burned eyes.

The lieutenant's room was on the

second floor of an old wing of the big hospital, not far from the ambulance entrance, and whenever he wakened in the night he could hear the whir of rubber tires on concrete and the squeal of brakes and the slamming of ambulance doors, and the low, calm voices of the orderlies as they went about their tasks.

ON this night he did not sleep. Did not even drop into tormented cat naps. There was unusual activity in the courtyard. Once, far across roofs, he made out the scream of fire department sirens. Again, a woman, who sounded drunk, shrieked wildly as she was removed from an ambulance.

Donovan lay motionless, watching the oblong of dim light which was his window, with the railing of the fire-escape across it, ominously like the bars of a prison. The detective had shaded the lamp as usual, and pulled it into a corner, so that the room was indistinct in brown and yellow shadows.

Already Donovan was beginning to understand the routine of the hospital. At two o'clock a group of nurses, walking silently on rubber heels, passed along the corridor, talking in low voices. They were going downstairs for their midduty bowls of hot soup.

Donovan did not envy them. The evening was too warm for soup. He was beginning once more to feel sleepy when some sound caused his eyes to pop open. Detective Peck still sat back in his chair inside the door. His head was tipped against the wall and he did not stir, so Donovan thought that he might be asleep.

The sound was repeated. It came from the direction of the window. Yes, Donovan recognized it. That was

the creak of a fire-escape ground fly, being pulled down. Often enough, when he'd tested fire-escapes, he'd heard that metallic whine as he pulled the final section of iron ladder down to the ground.

Still the detective did not move, and Donovan said nothing. There was a period of silence, perhaps a minute, maybe two. Then, without warning, a man bulked in the window.

Donovan could make out nothing but his silhouette, from the knees upward. He was a heavy man, and he wore a soft hat, and his face was indistinct. Suddenly Donovan knew why. He wore a mask of some kind, of dark cloth that dropped from his hat to his chin.

He paused a moment on the fire-escape outside of the window, as if making sure of his position, then lifted one foot to the sill. At the same time his arm lifted and against the gray night background Donovan saw a pistol in it.

Donovan shouted, "Who's that? Get out o' here!"

Detective Peck upset his chair as he leaped up. The man had a foot on the window sill. His arm with the pistol was pointing toward the bed. But it swung, as Peck leaped into action.

Donovan, propped on his elbows, yelled again. Peck dropped his right hand to his coat pocket.

"Stick 'em up, you!" he bade.

Instead, the intruder fired. Peck spun around like a top. But even as he spun, there was a flash of flame from his coat, in front of the pocket. The two shots, in this confined space, roared back and forth in fearful echoes.

Peck staggered against the wall. The man in the window paused for a moment, and then fell into the room. But

he was on his feet instantly, crawling out over the sill. Peck fired a second time, too late. The man was gone.

Orderlies and watchmen ran noisily along the corridors. Patients everywhere were shouting in weak, scared voices, calling their nurses. Bells began to ring.

The detective sagged against the wall, his service revolver clutched in his hand. Donovan could hear his heavy breathing, could see his knees, bending slowly, and his head drooping forward.

A nurse hurried in. "What on earth?" she demanded petulantly. "Wake up the whole wing!"

SHE snatched the shade off the light and as she did so the first of the watchmen plunged through the door, his time clock swinging from his shoulder by a strap. At the same time Detective Peck's knees buckled, his revolver clattered to the floor, and he pitched forward and lay still.

The watchman said amiably, "Well, well! They come right in and make themselves at home!" Then his voice changed, and he added quickly, "Here, this guy's shot!"

Donovan still was propped on his elbows. He tried to speak, to tell them what had happened, to send them out through the window on the trail of the fleeing gunman. But as he opened his mouth, his head gave a violent twist, his tongue seemed to swell up, and he dropped back, too tired to remember anything.

When he awakened this time, daylight poured into the window. Three large men were leaning over the sill, examining it closely. Detectives, of course. And Sergeant Sullivan, with a shotgun across his knees, sat with his usual expression of superiority.

Donovan turned to him, moistened his lips, and asked, "How's Peck?"

"Okay," Sullivan answered. He was pleasanter than usual. "In the next room. The slug just creased his chest and nicked his arm."

One of the men at the window turned. He was younger than the others, no older than Donovan himself.

"Oh, hello, Lieutenant," he said, cordially enough. "Sorry we waked you. I'm Inspector O'Malley, from the bureau. It was a close shave you had, Lieutenant. Have you any idea who it was took a pot at you?"

Donovan answered, "Why, yes, sir. It was Fraley. I mean..." He paused, trying to bring his thoughts into focus. "No, not Fraley. It was... well, somebody I'd seen before somewhere."

But that was as much as he could tell. It had been so dark, and he had seen the man so briefly, that only an impression was left on his feverish mind. Besides, the fellow wore a mask, didn't he?

O'Malley questioned him, not unkindly. The inspector took himself less seriously than Sergeant Sullivan.

Donovan said at last: "I can't remember. That's all. I just can't."

O'Malley looked thoughtfully at him for a moment, and said, "I believe you, Donovan," and he turned back to the window.

"It's blood, all right," one of the policemen told him then. "Peck nicked this hood, whoever he was," and he pointed to the sill.

Donovan watched them unexcitedly. So much had happened to him that it took more than another shooting, more or less, to stir his interest. What did it matter whether they caught the man who tried to kill him? If it hadn't been Fraley, then it was someone else. The

whole thing was too intricate for his hazy mind, and he slept again, in spite of himself.

CHAPTER VI.

NEW EVIDENCE.

INSPECTOR O'MALLEY returned to the hospital later in the morning and walked cheerfully into Donovan's room. He acknowledged Sullivan's salute with a careless wave of his hand toward his forehead, pulled up a chair and sat down beside the bed.

Donovan, watching him closely, realized that in spite of his affable voice, the inspector was more than a little troubled.

"Sorry to bother you again, Lieutenant," he began, "but I've got to get to the bottom of this whole business." He spoke without rancor, and Sergeant Sullivan glanced up at him and scowled, and continued to chew gum. "There's some connection," the inspector went on, "between this business last night and several other things."

"Meaning what?" Donovan asked.

"There's a hook-up between this attempt to shoot you and the fire at the Ridgefield building and Fraley's death. They all hang together. Things like that don't just happen."

Donovan said, "You bet they don't."

"If you'll talk..."

"I'll talk, all right!" Donovan said. "Plenty. But before I open my face, you got to get rid of this ape." He jabbed a thumb toward Sullivan, who glowered at him and turned wrathfully to the inspector.

"The prisoner's a radical red communist," the sergeant charged. "I've listened to the talk between him and

his crew. Talk about burning down station houses, and..."

"Okay, sergeant," O'Malley nodded, unruffled. "I'll investigate that angle, too. Meanwhile, you'd best take a walk in the corridor and give your hands and face a rest. I'll call you when you're needed."

He closed the door after the sergeant, pulled his chair closer to the bed and sat down. He leaned forward with a confidential air. "It takes all kinds to make a police department, Lieutenant," he said, and added, "Mind if I smoke?"

"I'll have one myself, till that blasted nurse sticks her head in," Donovan answered. "She's ruined more'n one smoke for me." O'Malley pulled out a silver cigarette case, and when Donovan had taken a cigarette from it, snapped open a silver lighter and held it for the lieutenant.

"How about telling the whole story, Donovan?" O'Malley began, his voice still friendly. "I don't mind saying that hell's popping plenty around the city hall. And when the reporters get hold of what happened at the hospital last night—as they're bound to—it will start popping in the newspapers too. There's several people that don't seem too well satisfied with the results of our investigation, so far, Donovan..."

"And I'm one, if you're asking me."

O'Malley grinned. "Of course," he agreed. "These others, too, seem to think there's some important facts which we haven't uncovered yet."

Donovan answered, "If I was to be as bunglin' as you cops, the town would burn down overnight."

"We may have muffed it, Donovan," the inspector said. "However..." He broke off shortly.

The door to the room had swung open. Donovan glared at it, ready to bark at Sergeant Sullivan. Instead, entering, were his own attorney, Kelly, and Ladderman Hogan. Kelly's face, as he saw O'Malley, flushed.

"What's the idea?" he demanded. "You can't talk to my client without me present! You know that, Inspector!"

"Why not?" the inspector demanded. Annoyance crept into his voice. "I'm just trying to find out about last night..."

"Last night?" Kelly repeated. "What do you mean, last night?"

O'Malley's upper lip twitched, and Donovan saw him start to smile. "I happen to be the second party," the inspector said, "that's tried to get at your client, Mr. Kelly, without benefit of counsel."

BRIEFLY he told what had happened, here at the window, in the dark. As he finished, Hogan turned angrily.

"You cops!" he charged. "I would not put it past you! You haven't nothing on him, so you try to knock him off!"

O'Malley demanded, "Who the hell you think you're talking to?"

"Oh, I know who! Know the whole kit and caboodle of you cops! Crookeder than a dog's hind leg."

"Shut up, Hogan," Donovan interrupted. The inspector had been decent enough, he thought. There was no use in letting Hogan turn loose his spleen just because the man wore a police badge. But Hogan opened his mouth again, and this time O'Malley said:

"You heard the lieutenant, didn't you?"

"So what?" Hogan shouted.

"So I don't have to push your teeth

down your throat, tough guy." The inspector still kept his voice low, but it cracked like a charge of static.

"This won't get us anywhere, gentlemen," the attorney said. "I've applied for a writ, Inspector. I'm going to have my client released. The hearing's this afternoon."

"I'll fight it," O'Malley replied.

Kelly went on, unruffled, "We're prepared to furnish bond. Cash bond, Inspector. As much as the court requires. Nothing could be fairer than that. For, you see, we've some evidence that you just happened to miss. Want to hear it?"

"I've an open mind," O'Malley replied.

"Open?" Hogan put in. "So wide open the wind blows through it without slowing down!"

O'Malley chose to ignore him. "What is the new evidence, Mr. Kelly?"

"My client's fire hat, Inspector. It was picked up by Captain Tom Harris of Engine 98, in the presence of three of his men, on the third floor of the Ridgefield building, while they were giving the job its final wash-up."

It was Donovan's own turn to exclaim. "Third floor!"

"Which proves several things," the attorney continued, speaking to Donovan himself this time. "You found Fraley's body on the fifth floor and an armed man in the room. There was so much fire in the corridor on fifth he couldn't get out that way. So he hit you on the head, took your slicker and fire hat as a disguise, and went out the window..."

"And the boys seen him, plenty of 'em," Hogan cut in. "Feelin' his way down the ladder!"

"Precisely," the attorney agreed. "I've gone into this pretty thoroughly,

Inspector. They saw a man climb out of the window, in the lieutenant's hat and coat. Then smoke concealed him. He didn't reach the street, but when they were able to see the ladder again, he was gone. What do you make of that?"

"Don't ask *me* riddles, Kelly," the inspector bade. He was not smiling now.

"I'm telling you answers," Kelly said. "That ladder passed less than six feet above the third floor fire-escape. It would have been very simple to get to it from the ladder. The killer jumped to the fire-escape, went in a window, dropped the fire hat, thereby getting rid of his disguise, and ran downstairs. I've an engine crew who will swear that he passed them."

O'Malley lighted a cigarette. "Why did he go to the trouble of climbing around on any ladder? Why didn't he go all the way down the stairs?"

"Because he wasn't made out of asbestos!" Hogan thundered. "Can't you get it in your head? Up above third floor, the stairs was full of fire!"

"I see," O'Malley said. "And you'll base your plea on that? Well, I'll fight you, Kelly. It's a pretty story, of course. But where's the slicker?"

"I haven't it," Kelly admitted. "It burned, for all I know."

"How would *it* happen to burn, and the hat not?"

Kelly countered, "How'd half the third floor happen to burn and the rest of it not? I'll meet your arguments, Inspector. We'll let the court decide."

"You forget that I've witnesses who will swear they heard your client threaten Fraley," the inspector said. "Who saw him attack Fraley in a brutal manner only a few days ago. Showing both resentment and premeditation, see? No, I'm for keeping the lieu-

tenant on ice. What time's the hearing? Three o'clock? Okay." He stood up and took his hat from the table. "No hard feelings, Lieutenant Donovan." He spoke affably, as if this had been a social call. "I'll be seeing you."

"Me, too," Hogan added, glowering. "You'll be seein' me!"

CHAPTER VII.

FAILURE OF DUTY.

THERE had been cause for Hogan's temper. He did not tell Donovan... why bother the lieutenant with more troubles than he had already? But matters, since the Ridgefield fire, had been far from happy in the quarters of Ladder Truck 9.

Because it covered a high-value district, jammed with hazardous occupancies; because the buildings in that district were, for the most part, Class-B insurance risks or worse; because here fire made a habit of bursting out violently and spreading relentlessly, Truck 9 must keep, always, its full complement of men.

Other companies might struggle along with not enough men to lay a double line of hose, in deference to the taxpayers, who immediately made up in insurance rates for their lower taxes. But economy or no, Truck 9 rolled out to alarms with a full crew. It requires an officer and at least eight laddermen to handle an eighty-five-foot aerial, to go aloft and open a big roof properly in three minutes, to carry up second lines for engine companies already at work, to rescue a dozen persons at once, with perhaps only ten seconds to spare.

So on each shift, Truck 9 carried its full quota. Until Donovan was hurt, that is. Then Hogan took over, with

seven men instead of eight, to give him a hand. Not enough, but it would do.

Then, on the third day that Donovan lay in the hospital, the even-numbered platoon—Donovan commanded the odd-numbered—while fighting a stubborn, smoky jobbing house fire, was blown out through a manhole, and three of its members were sent home for a week to nurse their bruises.

Battalion Chief Stonesifer at once shifted Ladderman Shumski from the second platoon temporarily to the first. That left Hogan only six men, and a bad disposition. But he hitched up his suspenders and promised the chief, without much enthusiasm, that he'd try to get along.

But today, even before he met Inspector O'Malley in Lieutenant Donovan's room at the hospital, things had started badly. At eight o'clock, while Hogan as on-coming officer was clumsily signing the watch log for the preceding night, Battalion Chief Stonesifer arrived stormily at the quarters.

"Have you got a young loud-talkin' upstart named Kearney on this outfit?" the old man inquired.

Hogan nodded. "A pet pig. He's on the roll, but I wouldn't say he was a fireman, chief."

"I'd like a few choice words with him, Hogan," the battalion commander said. He knitted his bushy gray eyebrows and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, a signal to anyone that knew him that trouble was on the way.

Hogan shouted for Kearney. The recruit came at once from the kitchen at the rear of the apparatus room, where he had gone to help himself to coffee.

"Um. Yes, yes, of course!" Stonesifer said upon seeing him. "I remem-

ber him now by his dumb and stupid looks. So you're Kearney, are you? Um. Well, well!" He wiped his mouth again.

Kearney answered, unabashed, "Yes, sir. That's me. What can I do for you?"

"Um." The chief searched for words, coughed twice, and glared. "I happened to see a bit of the record of the coroner's jury, Kearney. On the inquest into Alderman Fraley. It was very informin'. I happened to have a look at your testimony."

"Well, I told the truth."

HOGAN, listening, stepped closer, his long face streaked with curiosity. The other men, at their morning chore of rubbing down the sleek body of the truck, paused with rags motionless and listened too, attentively.

"It wasn't enough for you to go passing over the gun to the police," Stonesifer went on. "It wasn't enough for you to holler out for all the world and a couple of hundred politicians to hear, that the gun was in your commanding officer's hand."

"That's where it was," Kearney retorted. "Even Hogan don't deny that. Donovan's hand, that's where I took it from!"

"Lieutenant Donovan, you say, Kearney," Stonesifer bellowed. "You speak of your officers by their title! But this gun...it had dropped there, Kearney, and you know it! Or it was put there. But that ain't enough. You go blabbing now to the coroner's jury about Lieutenant Donovan having trouble with Fraley..."

"He did," Kearney again retorted. "I heard 'em. So did Hogan. They all heard it. All these men"—he motioned toward the truck.

"And bein' men, and not pet pigs, they kept their damn mouths shut about it, like you'd of done if you'd had a single ounce of respect for yourself and the department."

Hogan put in, unbelievably, "You mean he *told*...you mean he run off...made it look more like the lieutenant killed Fraley?"

Stonesifer answered, "It was on this recruit's evidence the jury made its findings."

"Nuts!" Kearney cried. "I had to tell the truth. I suppose you wanted me to commit perjury, eh? Try to put me out the department for tellin' the truth, will you? Just try!"

Stonesifer rubbed his mouth violently. "No," he admitted, "I can't put you out of the department for that. You've had your little day, gettin' your betters in trouble. But another day's coming. One step across the line, Kearney, just one, and watch out! One break in discipline...one rule broken, and... You keep your eyes on him, Hogan!"

"I'll sit up nights watching," the senior ladderman promised. "Don't have no fear, sir. I'll not go underhanded on him, oh, no! Not me. I'll be as fair and square as he is, sir. I'll remember to act just as he did when he talked to the police."

The men on the floor by the truck looked at one another. Like Hogan, they had no love for Kearney, nor for any other pet pig who entered the fire department by pulling political strings. It wouldn't be long, they told themselves, before there would be something to put down in writing.

The chief drove away in his little red buggy and the crew continued to wash the paintwork on the apparatus and to polish the brass. And Hogan, with permission from headquarters,

turned the company over to Driver Ahearn, who now, in Donovan's absence, was second in command, and Hogan himself went off to visit Donovan at the hospital.

He had been gone an hour, and the short-handed crew had finished the rest of its morning clean-up, when an alarm tapped in over the joker wire.

KEARNEY, untroubled by the chief's warning, and by the attitude of the men, had gone back to the kitchen to pour his interrupted cup of coffee. By either chance or design, Ahearn was sitting in the driver's seat when the alarm sounded, and Tillerlman Kurtz was leaning against the right rear wheel of the truck. Murphy and Leffingwell were idling on the footboard, and Cohen was bent over the alarm stand.

He snatched the location of the fire from the telephone and glanced back at the kitchen. There Kearney was singing confidently and loudly.

Ahearn jammed his foot on the starter and the motor caught instantly. At once the wheels began to turn. Kurtz was in place at the tiller, Leffingwell and Murphy had their helmets on and were gripping the elbow rail, when Cohen leaped to the rear end of the step.

The truck plunged out through the doors and was thundering on its way, before Kearney could set down his coffee cup. He ran out to the driveway after it. But the great truck was rolling fast, picking up speed. It screamed and dodged through traffic. None of its crew took time to glance back.

The fire was unimportant; in twenty minutes Ahearn was backing into the broad doors of the truck house again. Kearney stood by the alarm stand, scowling.

"A put-up job, eh?" he asked. "Well, smart boys, see where it gets you."

"It got us to the fire," Ahearn answered evenly. His temper was not as violent as Hogan's and he had a leash on his tongue. "And it gets you right into the little book, under failure of duty"; that's where it gets you, Mr. Kearney."

"You'll not get away with it," the recruit predicted. "There's ways and ways of handlin' such things!"

"Okay." Ahearn turned, picked up the telephone, and reported the company once more in service.

When Hogan returned he heard the story, and immediately began to write his official report on it, bearing down hard on his pen, while Kearney openly scoffed. He still was scoffing, after the hearty noon dinner, when he went out to the rear door of the quarters, to talk to a man from the taxi barn across the alley.

He was there, when for the second time that day, Truck 9 rolled out to duty without him. This time a real fire called it, and the job took forty minutes. When Hogan returned he hurriedly completed his report and wrote out a set of charges. In his capacity of acting commander, he then suspended Kearney from duty until such time as the trial board would meet, ordered him out of the house, and hurried to the lieutenant's hearing in criminal court.

CHAPTER VIII.

KEARNEY'S VISIT.

WHEN Ladderman Hogan entered Donovan's room at the hospital that afternoon his long face was less lugubrious than it had been in a week.

"You're free on bail," he told the lieutenant, and observing Sergeant Sullivan in the room, added triumphantly, "This ape that's guardin' you will be walkin' out any time now. It'll be a relief to your stummick not havin' to look at him."

Battalion Chief Stonesifer and sixty decent men of the battalion had dipped into their pockets and gone Donovan's bond, Hogan explained. Inspector O'Malley had promised new evidence, if only a day or two more were given to him, but the judge had listened to Attorney Kelly's arguments and released his client.

So much Hogan told; he refrained from mentioning Kearney. That situation, he figured, was well in hand and Donovan had enough to worry about for the present.

Therefore, on the eighth day after the Ridgefield building fire, Lieutenant Donovan limped down the steps of the hospital, his head still bandaged, his lungs still sore from the overdose of smoke, the color of his cheeks several shades paler than usual, but no handcuffs on his wrists.

The newspapers at last were screaming the story of the mysterious man who had watched Fraley that evening across from the quarters of Truck 9, the same shabby fellow Donovan saw in the room with the alderman's body.

Without freeing Donovan wholly from suspicion, they seized upon the other suspect avidly. They used up barrels of ink on huge headlines, they dubbed the fellow a "ghost killer," for some reason, and they made a holiday of Fraley's death and Donovan's split head.

Alderman Fraley had been buried in style. Hogan, on his afternoon off duty, had gone to the funeral, and dodging his hated police, found a van-

tage point in an apartment doorway across the street. There, sniffing with indignation, he watched the spectacular proceedings.

Marching men from clubs in half a dozen wards put on white gloves and their best suits and paraded; a band played sonorously; and admirers and politicians did their bit with seven carloads of flowers.

Hogan's eyes missed none of it, but they were unable in the crowd to pick out the man who had spied upon Fraley that first night.

"But if I ever do see him," he promised Donovan that afternoon, "he'll think that a wall has fell on him."

The lieutenant went home from the hospital next morning, his mind still deeply uneasy. He sensed that he had not yet heard the last of this dreadful business. Trouble never left a man that quickly; it still was hanging on, waiting to take a rap at him, when he least expected it. But what would happen next? And when?

At least, he'd look in on the quarters of Truck 9 tomorrow. It would do him good to get back to the apparatus room and hear the cheerful arguments of the men, and smell the rich, mingled odors of brass polish and gasoline and oil. Visitors had been limited at the hospital; Ladderman Hogan was the only member of the crew he had seen.

But on that first evening out of the hospital two events occurred which threw his plans into confusion. He had eaten heartily at a small neighborhood restaurant, enjoying the solidity of the food after eight days of nicely balanced hospital fare. As he came out of the place, a purple September twilight had fallen upon the city, but the sidewalks still were bustling with home-going workers.

OUTSIDE the door he noticed a little short man in a black derby hat, who stood reading the bill of fare, pasted on the window. The man looked up at him without interest, and Donovan, equally incurious, went on. But when he had walked two blocks and discovered the same little man behind him still, the lieutenant quickened his pace and crossed the street.

The man, also, followed. Donovan reduced his speed, and the other slowed down too. There could be little doubt that the fellow was following him. Yet Donovan hated to believe it. It would not do for him to get the jitters. He blamed it on his imagination and turned in to his own house.

His room was on the first floor. This was one of those old gray stone dwellings on a quiet side street, where the roar of boulevard traffic drifted as faintly as the rumble of distant seas. The hallway always smelled of cooking from the landlady's quarters in the basement.

Donovan stepped into the familiar dimness of the hall. His door was first on the right, and as he turned toward it he became aware, as he had not been on the street, that a light was burning in his room.

He opened the door quickly. It was unlocked; he left it so always. But this time someone had entered. A man was sitting at his table, looking at a newspaper. He spoke as Donovan came through the door, and Donovan recognized the voice.

"Lieutenant, I wanted to talk to you," the voice said, its tone wheedling, and Donovan let his clenched fist drop.

"Oh, hello, Kearney," he answered. He could feel his heart thumping against his ribs and was ashamed. But why should Kearney, of all the mem-

bers of the crew, be the first to visit him? Kearney didn't like him, and Heaven knew he didn't like Kearney.

He didn't like any pet pig who got into the fire department by pulling political strings. While he lay in the hospital he'd planned to ask Battalion Chief Stonesifer to have the young upstart transferred away from the outfit to some company that didn't mind pet pigs. "You gave me a surprise, Kearney," he added. "Didn't expect you."

The ladderman got up from the chair. He was in civilian clothes, Donovan noticed, and seemed ill at ease, as if he knew that perhaps he had no right to be here.

"Sit down again," Donovan bade, cheerfully enough. "This isn't your day off, is it?"

Kearney laughed. Donovan never did like his laugh, it was so superior, yet a little out of the side of his mouth. Not quite an honest laugh.

"Every day's my day off, from now on, lieutenant," he said; "every day for a little while, that is. Hogan did not tell you. Well, he's to blame."

"For what, Kearney?" Donovan inquired, his back stiffening.

"For a hell of a lot. He's been laying for me. Trying to get something on me to file charges about ever since you ki . . ." he paused, and went on lamely, "ever since you been away."

Donovan answered, "So he's filed charges?"

"Yeh, and it's a put-up job. That's what I come to see you about. If you or Hogan know what's good for you, you'll pull 'em back. Hogan planned it out with the rest of the men. So when I missed the rig twice in one day..."

"Miss it twice in a day? Miss it twice when it's rolling to alarms?"

"I TELL you they framed me. The rest of the outfit was all just sitting beside the truck waiting, and before I could run in from the kitchen it's gone. On its way. And me left behind. Oh, you don't need to think I don't understand!"

"But you missed the rig!" Donovan reminded him.

"That's got nothing to do with it. Just because I testified 'fore the coroner's jury..."

"Because you *what*?" Donovan asked, incredulously. He realized suddenly what was behind the complaint. "Because you did *what*?"

"I saw you layin' there with the gun in your hand, didn't I? I took the gun, away from you, didn't I? Turned it over to the cops. So when Cohen goes before the jury and says he didn't see no gun, hell, I tell 'em the truth. Just because you're an officer isn't any reason..."

"Listen, Kearney," Donovan said. He felt the bandages tighten on his head and he braced his feet. "So it was *you* got me in this, was it? You blabbing a lot of false testimony to the police and that jury? Well, I understand what Hogan's been doing! Understand plain. It was you, rattin' on me, that—"

"Nuts!" Kearney interrupted. "Don't pull that! I still got friends, even if you did...even if Fraley is dead. He was a friend of mine, sure, but he wasn't the only politician in the ward!"

Donovan moved forward a step and spoke deliberately.

"If you don't start walking out that door this minute, Kearney, I'll kick you out! So help me..."

Kearney, seeing the expression on his face, backed quickly toward the door. He snatched it open, stepped into the hallway, and spoke tauntingly.

"Okay, big shot," he cried derisively. "You asked for it! You got it coming to you!"

With that he was gone.

CHAPTER IX.

SHADOWED.

DONOVAN stood a long time motionless after the man departed.

His rage slowly boiled away. What could he expect of a pet pig, after all? And Hogan... wasn't it like old Hogan, backing his chief when he couldn't defend himself? And keeping his big mouth shut about it afterward, for fear of worrying a fellow?

Hogan would be sitting in front of the alarm stand right now, waiting for his nine o'clock bedtime. It was only half a dozen blocks to the truck house. Right down this street, a block on the boulevard, and then into Washington. Donovan remembered that the doctor had been fussy when he left the hospital, had told him to take it easy for a few days.

Easy, hell! He was going to walk to the quarters of Truck 9 tonight if he never walked again! Going to see Hogan and the boys. The rest of them weren't like Kearney. They were firemen, by the holy hydrants! Firemen! That's what they were.

He let himself out of his room, locked the door after him this time, and stood a moment in the hallway, while his better judgment struggled against his desires. Then he finally opened the front door and walked slowly down the five worn stone steps to the sidewalk.

Carlights, like showers of meteors, swept up the boulevard. Night had fallen completely now, absorbing the purple twilight, and its darkness,

brushed by the city lights, took on the color of old brown velvet. No stars were visible, but the long arm of an airplane beacon swung slowly and untiringly around its orbit, above the housetops.

Donovan breathed deeply. It was good to be free again, good to be able to walk, without the suspicious round eyes of Sergeant Sullivan following him. He wondered how Detective Peck was feeling. Better, he hoped. Peck would be out of the hospital Sunday, he had heard. He'd have to look him up, thank him for quick work.

He walked slowly. He had forgotten the man who apparently followed him from the restaurant, an hour ago. His rage at Ladderman Kearney had washed his memory clear of the other incident. He turned at the brightly lighted boulevard and, staying on the inside of the broad walk, continued slowly toward the truck house.

Early evening promenaders, well-dressed and self-contained, walked singly and in small groups, paying no attention to Donovan. He wore his soft dark felt hat on the side of his head, to conceal the bandages as much as possible. Occasionally he paused, to rest and to glance into shop windows.

Once, as he did so, he looked back. The short little man in the derby hat who had followed him early in the evening was just turning to look into the window of the next shop behind him. Donovan felt a sudden swift surge of anger and insecurity. He knew then that he was being trailed.

His first thought was that this was the man he had seen that other night in the hospital window, against the background of the fire-escape bars.

But he knew at once that it could not be the same; this fellow was leaner and he held his head straighter. But

no matter who he was, he was following, slipping along secretly. Donovan thought of the two remaining dark blocks before he reached the truck house, once he turned off the boulevard.

He swung around and started deliberately toward the man, but when the fellow continued to peer calmly into the window, Donovan paused. At last he turned back and went on his way.

He walked faster than his strength permitted. And next time, when he looked over his shoulder again, the little man was gone. He decided to lie in wait for him, so he turned into the first convenient doorway. It was a stair entrance, between two shops. But as he stepped into it he was conscious suddenly that someone was there ahead of him.

A voice said, "Excuse!"

THE tone was familiar to him. It stirred his memory so that he could hardly prevent himself from crying out. His eyes, taking in the darkness of the entry, made out the man's features.

He was standing face to face with the stranger he first had seen lurking by a billboard that night when Alderman Fraley called with his offer of graft, the one who had cried for help from a high window in the Ridgefield building, and had hit Donovan with the fire ax and escaped.

Donovan took a step closer. He might be mistaken...no, it was the same one. And he saw him better this time. The face had been shaven clean before, but this time it needed a razor, and his hair, Donovan could see now, was almost white...more than gray, at least...almost white in this light, and long around the ears.

The fellow was speaking in a low

mumble. "Excuse!" he repeated. "Please, mister, I am most sorry. I must do it that day, or else I do not escape. Excuse!"

Donovan lunged at him. He caught him by his neck, which was short, for the size of the rest of him, and his fingers closed in. The man shouted once, unintelligibly, and began to pummel Donovan with his bare hands. He was powerful. Donovan was wincing from the blows when the other lifted his foot and kicked vigorously at the lieutenant's shins, and Donovan released his grip.

Before he realized it he was standing alone, panting, and the man was gone. At the same instant the other little man who had been trailing him along the street ran up.

"Lieutenant Donovan!" he was calling. "Oh, there you are! What happened? Are you hurt?"

Donovan started to back away from him, too, but the man was tipping down his lapel with his left hand, disclosing his nickel-plated police badge.

"I'm Rogers. From the bureau, Mr. Donovan. Assigned to guard you. What's happened?"

Donovan panted, "Get that man! There he goes! Through traffic, there, across the street!"

The detective started toward the curb, but swung back.

"Did he—attack you?"

"Get him!" Donovan bade.

The other plunged recklessly into the swirl of traffic, dodged cars, and disappeared in the crowd on the other side of the boulevard. Donovan still was leaning, his knees weak, against the building front, when Rogers returned empty handed.

"Who was it?" he demanded. "What did he try to do?"

But Donovan was angry now. He

had been thinking...what was this dick doing, trailing him? "What *you* doing?" he demanded of him. "Shadowing me?"

"Yes and no. Oh, not to keep you from running out on us! Your bond takes care of that."

"What for, then?" Donovan spoke sharply, his anger churning like a thousand gallon pumper inside him.

"To keep just this kind of thing from happening. To protect you. Somebody tried to get you in the hospital, didn't they? Who was *this* party? I heard you holler, I saw him run, but I can't tell what happened. Inspector O'Malley will want to know..."

"Take a message to O'Malley," Donovan said.

"Surest thing."

"Tell him from me to go to hell."

HE turned on his heel and started toward the corner. He was in no mood to reason...he turned on Rogers again and told him to leave him alone. Now that he was out on bond, was there any excuse for O'Malley putting another cop on his trail?

Rogers, attempting to be inconspicuous, trotted along after him, but not too closely. Donovan, giving him divided thought, thinking first of him and then of the man who had fled, stopped again finally and let Rogers gain upon him.

"I told you not to follow me!" Donovan said.

The detective answered, "Like to accommodate you, but I can't. I get my orders from headquarters."

Donovan hesitated, trying to make up his mind what to do next. And as he stood, his decision was made for him. Across the roofs, down the dark canyon of Washington street, a familiar sound was rising, the shrill, an-

guished wail of the siren on Ladder Truck 9. Donovan began walking forward at once, his ears alert.

For an instant the siren's shriek seemed to be receding. Where was it going? In the other direction? Then it burst out again, full lunged, not a block away.

As he arrived at Washington Street, he could see its blinking crimson lights, high on the frame, flashing their warning.

The truck would have to slow down for the boulevard, he knew. And if he could only get Ahearn's attention, or Hogan's... He stepped down quickly into the street. Men and women were scurrying to the curbs, and the traffic officer on duty at the intersection was dancing up and down, trying to halt the stream of heedless cars from both directions.

He succeeded only in causing a minor jam, and Donovan, as the truck approached, heard its tires grunting against the pavement as the brakes caught and its rear end swung perilously left and right. Tillerman Kurtz, above the rear axle, was fighting the big wheel, and Ahearn, on the driver's seat, was braced back stiffly, his foot on the brake.

Donovan glanced back over his shoulder. Detective Rogers was watching the apparatus, too. Watching it, rather than Donovan. It would take good timing to accomplish what he wanted to do...Donovan knew that. He waited. The tractor front of the ladder truck came up alongside, but neither Hogan nor Ahearn had chance to notice a single obscure pedestrian in a black felt hat, standing below the curb.

Traffic opened ahead; Ahearn gave the motor the gun, and the big truck leaped forward. The tractor started to

swing to the right. That meant that Kurtz would pull the rear end around to this side, almost to the curb, to avoid the farther corner.

DONOVAN stepped back. The detective was less than half a dozen paces from him. Hogan, at the left of the driver's seat, was twisting the siren crank and slashing at the lanyard of the brass bell. Up on his perch, above the rear trailer wheels, Tillerman Kurtz spread his feet and braced them on the rungs of the recumbent aerial ladder. He swung the wheel mightily. The rear trucks started to pull to the left. Donovan glanced again at Detective Rogers. Rogers was still engrossed in the apparatus. So Donovan leaped.

He caught the hand grip above the long running board and pulled himself up. Ladderman Cohen, hanging just ahead of him, turned about with a scowl that was wiped from his face by a look of astonishment.

"You!" he shouted. "Loot!"

Donovan grinned. He glanced back. The detective had not been quick enough. He was tearing through the crowd, running backward and forward like a dog inside a picket fence. He hadn't seen that quick leap and had lost his quarry. Donovan continued to grin.

"Hello, Cohen," he shouted. "Where's the fire at?"

CHAPTER X.

INVISIBLE GAS.

THE fire proved to be one of those unspectacular smudges that firemen hate worst. It was confined to the bargain basement of a small and shoddy department store, and was a

great disappointment to those several hundred citizens who, knowing nothing about what was happening inside, considered a fire that failed to light the heavens a very dull and uninteresting event.

Engine 13, first in at this location, already was running out its line as Truck 9 rolled to the curb with Donovan still aboard. Squad 1, swinging the corner on two wheels, careened drunkenly and brought up with a sharp cry of brakes in the car tracks. Somewhere from the direction of Adams street the Insurance Patrol was yelling its way through traffic.

There was no smoke visible. No flame. No heat. No excitement. Passers-by halted momentarily, and then, disappointed, went on about their affairs. Policemen, arriving, did not see fit even to put up their lines, and street cars continued to rumble past, their passengers looking out with scant interest at the apparatus.

Donovan slid down from the running board, grabbed an ax, and hurried forward. He reached into the gear box, under the ladders, where he knew the extra helmet was kept for emergencies, put his felt hat in its place, slid into the extra rubber slicker, which was too narrow across the shoulders, and shouted to Hogan:

"Ladderman Donovan reports, sir!"

He grinned at Hogan's astounded expression and turned toward the store entrance. The captain of Engine 13 was running out.

"Bring that line in!" he yelled at his crew. "Basement!"

Hogan shouted at Donovan, "Set down, lieutenant! Don't you come in!"

"I'm okay," Donovan answered. "I'll go with you. Just take a look." To the engine company commander he called, "What you got?"

"Quite a smudge. Can't tell yet. Stock room. Thicker'n gravy down there."

"Down there? Basement? Hogan, you best break out a coupla false faces."

Hogan again started to protest Donovan's participation. Then he turned obediently and snapped up the lid of the gas mask container on the running board. He dragged out the masks, and clutching one in each hand, ran back toward the door. Donovan already had gone into the building. All the lights were on, in straight, unimaginative rows along the drab ceiling. Donovan was limping, Hogan noticed.

"Hey, Loot! You gotta get out!" the senior ladderman shouted, and ran up again to Donovan. "You're not on duty yet. If you'd get hurt..."

"I know. No compensation," Donovan said, but he went on deliberately.

He could see the broad wooden stairs, their treads painted in an imitation of marble which would not fool a child. The aisles were too narrow, exactly seven feet, the minimum under the building code. Bargain squares were heaped with cheap merchandise, toilet articles, flashy jewelry, notions. He saw bolts of cloth upon shelves; flimsy hosiery, sweatshop dresses, and the festoons of paper flowers above the corset counter. It all stood out bold and uninviting in the uncompromising brilliance of the lights.

But Donovan smelled no smoke. Felt no heat. Saw no blaze. Caught no whiff of chemicals or gases in his throat. He was tired already, breathing rapidly, and his knees were weak. As he started down the stair he discovered that the fire ax in his hand felt astoundingly heavy and he realized that he was foolish to try to fight any blaze in this half-groggy condition.

Nevertheless he went on stubbornly, holding his knees stiff to keep them from buckling as he went down the stair. Even in the basement there was no sign of smoke. He could hear the pounding heels of the crew of Engine 13 on the floor above him, and the thump of brass couplings dragged along the old sagging floors as the hosemen laid line. Somewhere Hogan was yelling at Cohen to bring a ceiling hook and a claw tool. Somewhere else glass crashed. That would be the squad company, breaking in from the rear.

STILL no flame. No smoke. No fumes that he could smell. If the stock on the first floor had been shoddy, Donovan thought as he walked between tables in even narrower aisles than above, this in the basement was worse than junk. And to his professional eyes, it was the most villainous junk in the world.

He could see it piled all around him. There were imitation ivory toilet articles, dresser sets of cellulose, combs, candlesticks, cheap desk sets, hair ornaments, toys...in all colors and shapes and sizes, but all with one thing in common. Nitro-cellulose.

Of course Donovan hated the stuff. What fireman doesn't? He'd often wondered why civilized governments permitted it. All cheap stores were full of it. And burning nitro-cellulose, he knew, as every fireman knows, is more deadly than gunpowder, once fire gets into it.

It burns less spectacularly, of course. Burns fast, with a small creeping white smoke. But he knew it wasn't the smoke that made it dangerous, any more than the flame. It was the invisible gases it gave off, gases which no human nose could detect, gases which often acted hours after they

were inhaled, filling a fireman's lungs with torment, knocking him so completely out that members of the other platoon must put on white gloves and carry him solemnly to his grave.

Donovan sniffed. Still nothing to smell. It was certainly a good thing that the fire wasn't on these tables here. A man in overalls shouted to him:

"Hey, you! You with the ax! Back this way. I've got the door closed, to keep drafts out. Yes, sir. In this stockroom."

"What you got stored in there?" Donovan demanded.

The man answered, "Woolen blankets, mostly, and yard goods."

Not cellulose, then. But wool could be bad enough. Donovan glanced back. Hogan was running toward him, He carried an ax and a grappling claw. Cohen, behind him, dragged the ceiling hook, and wore his gas mask, strapped to his shoulders, but hanging loose, flapping on his chest. Leffingwell and Kurtz were at the foot of the stair, and Murphy, on their heels, was strapping the second gas mask as he ran.

Behind them the members of Engine 13 were dragging their hose. The big brass nozzle like a sparkling cannon thrust itself forward in their midst. There'd be plenty of water in a couple of minutes. Donovan opened the door the man indicated and stepped cautiously through it.

This was a stockroom. Oh, there was fire, all right. Smoke curled along the ceiling, and the place was hot. The dim electric lights were haloed in yellow circles. Boxes and cases stood ceiling deep everywhere. Somewhere among them the fire was nibbling.

"We can't seem to find it," the man in overalls said. "Looked for it twenty minutes before we called you."

Donovan realized suddenly that his

head ached from this unaccustomed exertion. Panting, he began to move cases. They were heavy and stacked in confusion.

"Think it's in here?" he asked.

DONOVAN saved his breath. He merely nodded, but even that made his head ache. Hogan and Murphy were spilling other boxes in a corner, and Cohen, with his ceiling hook, was poking experimentally into dark corners.

"Ready for water?" the commander of Engine 13 demanded from the door.

"In a minute," Donovan answered.

The engine company officer yelled, "Charge line! Engine 13, charge your line! Water...water...charge line!"

Other voices on the stairway and on the first floor picked up the words and flung them like echoes back through the doorway from the street.

"Here comes the pressure," a pipe-man warned.

The men around the nozzle gripped it expectantly, even though the shut-off was closed and no stream could pound out of its tip.

"Knock over that pile of boxes," Donovan ordered.

He saw Hogan start toward a heap of cardboard containers in the corner, and at the same instant Leffingwell said, "Sir, I got to get out!"

When Donovan glanced into his face he saw agony there. The man's eyes were popping, his skin was clammy. He swung on one foot in a ridiculous kind of waltz step, and his knees bent. Donovan caught him as he fell.

"Heads up, men!" he warned. "Watch out for the gas!"

Funny it hadn't caught him first! Just out of the hospital, and with a broken head in the bargain. And ten

years older than Leffingwell on top of that. He let the younger man down as gently as he could. Hogan was poking at the same pile of boxes. The others of the crew had halted and looked, with fear stamped plainly on their faces, at Leffingwell sprawled there on the dirty floor.

"Hand, Murphy!" Donovan gasped. "Give hand. Put on your mask...you too, Cohen. Masks."

The men of Engine 13 still stood in the doorway, their hose nozzles poised, like gunners on a fire step. Donovan said, "Well, get a move on, Cohen!"

But the recruit was standing awkwardly, as if his fingers were paralyzed trying to find the elastic headstraps of the mask. Then, without warning he, too, stiffened and dropped backward to the floor. Donovan peered down unbelievably at him.

"Murphy!" he shouted. But he couldn't see Murphy. Couldn't see Hogan, even. Was he going blind? He blinked. No, he could see the smoke. Could see the dim electric lights. Could see a pair of feet protruding from behind a stack of boxes.

Another voice said, "Got to get out, too!"

This was Kurtz, staggering toward the door. The engine crew caught him and carried him. Donovan tried to reason things out. Everybody was down. Even Hogan. Alone of his crew, he still was standing. His mind was shaky as his knees, however. He felt a sudden, unreasonable fury at the men who had fallen.

He bent over Murphy and picked him up, and dragged him to the air. Then he went back, while the captain of the engine company shouted at him to stay out. He hit the engine captain

across the mouth, without provocation, and waded back into the room.

The captain yelled, "Rescue squad! Get rescue squad! Gas masks! Monoxide!"

HE knew the symptoms. Carbon monoxide makes a man fight.

Makes even a gentle soul unreasonable and wild and violent, and within six or seven minutes leaves him dead.

Donovan was leaning over Cohen now. He was swearing to himself in a blurred voice. Cursing his crew. Calling them unpardonable things. Charging them with cowardice and with not being men. He could stand a little smoke himself! These laddermen acted like civilians! They weren't laddermen any more. Just pet pigs. *He* could take a little gas...

He was dragging Cohen toward the door now. A heap of boxes obscured the view of the engine crew there. But he'd take Cohen out and come back for more.

But he did not get Cohen out. Without warning something seemed to strike him across the back of his neck, and he dropped. As he fell, a heap of boxes tumbled on top of him. He lay still.

Squadmen in masks, two minutes later, searching the room through heavier smoke, found the other members of his crew. But they did not find Donovan.

"I guess he got out," one of the engine company said. "Must of. Can't see him."

The squadmen backed cautiously away. At the same time a flame flicked over the top of a packing case and ran along the ceiling. Donovan lay just beneath it, hidden from view.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

*Rufus Sayville, entering the Adirondack wilderness of 1820, finds
that other men have a curious, even a deadly,
interest in his mission*



*Novelette—
Complete*

The Wolf of Cobble Hill

By WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

Author of "Strange Brethren,"
"Mountain Murder," etc.

CHAPTER I.

FOUR AGAINST ONE.

HOW sweet the breeze! How fair
the mountains, rich green near
at hand and in the far distance
of a blue that made the soul ache with

its beauty. If it had not been for the
two horsemen behind who kept pace
with him, Rufus Sayville would have
had a better nose for that air and a
less disturbed eye for the mountains.
He looked to the priming of his pis-
tols and resolved to try again to shake
the strangers off.

All the way up from Lake Cham-
plain into the high country they had
followed him, at first without being



Sayville's shot took one of them

particularly noticed and then becoming conspicuous by their dogged persistence. Now they were the only other travelers on this wild mountain road. It was, in fact, a good place for them to try to overtake him, if that was what they wanted. And their actions, in the untamed Adirondacks of 1820, meant just one thing—robbery.

At the top of a ridge Sayville halted and turned shoulders so broad that they made him seem like a wedge set upon his leggy bay horse—an exaggerated wooden cavalryman such as children use in their mimic wars. His rugged, homely face was undisturbed, but in his clear gray eyes sparks were beginning to glow as he looked back upon a turn of the highway below him. The two pursuers had halted and were watching.

There wasn't any particular reason for this, so far as the young man knew, for he had come direct by sailing packet from Troy. No one here in this lawless country could know that a chamois belt of gold encircled his waist, or that his tight buttoned coat of tricot cloth contained credentials which would

make him welcome to every ironmaster in these mountains, where the best ore of the country was being mined and forged into iron. So he thought.

Sayville touched the heels of varnished boots to his horse, and galloped. The men below suddenly put their mounts to the hill as though life depended on making time up that stony slope. A smile flickered at Sayville's mouth corners. Their nags could never overtake the finely bred horse that he had brought with him on the packet. He swung around a turn of the road singing:

"A fig for those by law protected;
Liberty's glorious feast . . ."

His voice died as his hand tightened on the reins and brought the bay back to his haunches, with iron shod hoofs throwing sparks from the stones. Man and horse slid half a length. For not a hundred feet ahead two mounted men in brown homespun waited, each with a rifle lying across his saddle.

In the first moment of amazement Sayville heard the pound of hoofs behind, and remembered. He fairly lift-

ed his own horse, so that forefeet pawed the air, and with the animal's body for a bulwark, fired. Both rifles had been leveled at him. One of the men pitched from the saddle and the other shouted something indistinguishable. Sayville backed his horse into the brush at the roadside and fired again just as his two pursuers came around the bend.

A HORSE went down, rolling under the feet of the other. Men and beasts tangled in a kicking, scrambling mass. Both of Sayville's pistols were now empty and there was but one thing to do—ride straight at the second rifleman, who for some inexplicable reason had held his fire. But before Sayville could make a move still another horseman came around the turn of the road.

A gentleman, this one was, wearing a tall beaver hat and sitting a black hunter as though he were glued to him. The hunter took that mess in the road as though it were a five barred gate. His rider shouted something at Sayville and together they went at the rifleman.

Together they struck him, bending low. He fired into the air as he and his mount went down. Then the wind was whistling past Sayville's ears and he was riding knee to knee with a laughing, pale devil of a young man, whose hair was as black as the coat of his horse and who looked out of a pair of eyes as penetrating as any Rufus Sayville had ever seen. They did not draw rein for a mile. Then the stranger pulled down to a halt and lifted his hat with a graceful gesture.

"Charles Goodroe, sir, at your service," he announced. "I judge that you are a newcomer to our mountains?"

"Yes, and my name is Rufus Sayville, of Troy. I am here in the interest of the Burdett and Rankin Foundry. As a matter of fact, Mr. Goodroe, I believe you are one of the ironmasters I am supposed to call on."

With ceremonious bows the men shook hands.

"You will consider my house your home while you are here, sir," said Goodroe. "It will be safer than staying at a tavern and riding about without an escort. For unless I am mistaken, those men who waylaid you were not robbers but the henchmen of another of our forge owners; a man named Luther Bradfield, but better known as the Wolf of Cobble Hill."

RUFUS SAYVILLE and Charles Goodroe leaned back in their chairs with a rich port glowing red in their glasses. It had been a most satisfactory dinner, although served by a slatternly mountain woman broad of beam and with the shadow of a mustache darkening her upper lip. His cigars and cognac, Goodroe confessed, were smuggled down the lake from Canada.

"And now," said Goodroe, smiling, with his brilliant black eyes fastened on the face of his guest, "I'll tell you what lies behind that outrage on the highway this afternoon. You were threatened with kidnapping."

"Why should anyone want to kidnap me?" asked Sayville, a little bewildered. "Especially an ironmaster. I came to do business with the forge owners of the Adirondacks."

"That is exactly the point!" exclaimed Goodroe. He drained his glass and two red spots appeared against the pallor of his cheeks. "The Black River, the Bouquet, and the Raven are strung with forges, for there's going to be

money in this iron. But so far the markets have been slow to respond. Your firm cannot buy from everyone, but the first man to sign a contract will be in luck. And, confidentially, most of us are hard up."

"Does this Wolf of yours imagine that he can make me sign a contract? And that one signed under duress will hold?"

"He could hold you until he had begun shipment, and received monies from your firm. And if you try to break a contract with him, what chance do you think you will have in the courts here? A jury can be bribed or intimidated."

"I shall visit each ironmaster with an armed escort," said Sayville, thoughtfully.

"That is your solution? Rather than to buy a fine quality of iron from me, for instance, without exposing yourself to the risk of trouble? Bradfield and all of us knew you were coming."

"It is fair to my firm and to everyone."

Goodroe reached toward a little hand bell that stood on the table.

"Then let's leave business for the evening. I have had a crate of oranges and lemons sent by packet from New York. We'll mix a punch."

The bell jangled. The door by which the serving woman entered was pushed open and she stood on the threshold with a silver tray. There she halted, while her mouth opened and an orange and yellow cascade of fruit fell to the floor. For the tall French windows of the room had suddenly been flung wide and the embrasures were filled with armed men.

The master of the house rose slowly to his feet, with a hand gripping the back of his chair. Sayville stood up, but he knew that they were helpless.

Every door and window was blocked. The kitchen wench was shoved violently forward and a lumpy giant appeared behind her.

"What does this mean?" demanded Goodroe.

THE man from the kitchen swaggered into the room. Pockmarked, with a trickle of tobacco juice running from a mouth corner, he seemed to take a sneering delight in the predicament of his betters. He stood with thumbs thrust into the armholes of a linsey-woolsey waistcoat and considered them.

"You ain't going to be long finding out what it means!" he said, and clapped his hands.

Two of his men came forward with ropes in their hands.

In something less than five minutes Sayville and Goodroe were lashed to their graceful, high-backed mahogany chairs. The evil smelling crew which had taken possession of the house gathered around the table. Silver and linen had been swept back and the paunchy leader was counting out the gold from Sayville's money belt.

All the bland good nature had gone from Rufus Sayville's face. It now suggested granite, and his eyes were like dark, illumined glass as he stared at the dozen plug-uglies in jeans and homespun. They looked to him like forge workmen, with a touch of something else. Perhaps they were the the hangers-on of the little forge hamlets, part way between out and out criminals and honest men.

Goodroe sat in his chair quietly, paper white but not from fear. He had regained possession of himself after the first appearance of the brigands. Without a word he had watched while the big leader tore open Sayville's

tailed coat, to find the money belt under silken waistcoat and shirt of fine cambric. Now he spoke:

"My man," he said to the leader, "don't they call you Buck Horn?"

The pitted face split to a mocking laugh.

"It's going to be *Mister* Buck Horn after this! They's gold enough here to set me up for a gentleman!"

"Nothing can do that!" exclaimed Goodroe, sharply. "Who sent you here? What did you come for? You couldn't know, any more than I did, that my guest carried a belt of gold."

"I jest thought I'd look to see," chuckled Horn, almost in good humor. "Sometimes gennelmen does carry gold in body belts. Anyway we come after him, not you, Mr. Goodroe."

"But who sent you, and what for?"

"I took up a trail a wolf was follering, and soon as the boys gets a drink, by your leave, we'll take him and go."

"Damn your impudence!" said Goodroe between clenched teeth. "Get your drink and get out! There's a keg of ale in the cellar. You may go down and broach it. And if there's any law at all in this country you'll suffer."

"We'll take our chances on the fat sheriff ketching of us! He's set in the tavern at Pleasant Valley so long he couldn't climb Cobble Hill if a bear was after him!"

Horn had refilled the money belt and buttoned down the flaps under the envious eyes of his men. Failing to make it go around his enormous waist, he stuffed it inside his shirt and with a wave of his arm drew his followers after him out of the dining room.

GOODROE twisted around as well as he could in his chair and looked into Sayville's blazing eyes. "I hoped the ale would get

them out of here so that we could be alone for a few minutes!" he exclaimed in a low voice. "I've thought of something. This fellow is hired by Bradfield, there's no doubt of it! There's only one way you can beat him, and that's by making a prior contract with me. If he finds out you've made a bargain with me, in writing, he will be blocked. You'll be useless to him. Perhaps I can bribe this stupid Horn to let us finish some business before he takes you away."

"No," interrupted Sayville. "I have a better plan."

He had been gathering himself in the chair, trying his muscles against the ropes that bound arms, legs and body. The chair suddenly groaned with the complaint of tortured wood. Sayville hunched his enormous shoulders. His body straightened up with a crash of rending spindles and rungs. He had crushed the chair against him. In a moment he was free from the fragments of wood and the now loosened bonds.

Goodroe stared, lips parted, with a peculiar look that seemed close to fear in his black eyes. He began to struggle against his own bonds.

"Set me free!" he cried hoarsely. "Good heavens! I never saw anything like that!"

"Directly," replied Sayville, feeling of his bruises.

"What are you going to do?" demanded Goodroe.

Rufus Sayville smiled, but without mirth.

"Why," he said, "I'm going to get this Wolf of Cobble Hill and take him with me on my rounds as a hostage for his own good behavior."

"You can't attempt that!" cried Goodroe. "It will be suicide! I won't let you!"

Suddenly Goodroe raised his voice and shouted with all the power of his lungs.

"Horn! Come up here!"

"You idiot!" cried Sayville, as he ran to a window "Untie yourself."

From high in the embrace of a pine that nearly brushed the house with its branches he watched Horn's ruffians run to and fro, shouting. When the pursuit had at length spread out beyond the grounds, Sayville came down cautiously and approached the stable.

A hostler lay on a grain box, composing himself for sleep after the hubbub. He sprang up at the sound of Sayville's boot heels. Rufus Sayville grinned at him. Then he stepped forward and feinted with his left hand in the method taught him at Michael Boyle's Boxing Academy for Gentlemen, in New York. A wild swing went over his lowered head. His right fist sank deep into the stableman's middle. Two minutes later Sayville's horse was saddled and he was riding quietly away from the house of Charles Goodroe.

Before coming to the Adirondacks, he had studied carefully a map of this section of the iron country. That would be Cobble Hill, which loomed darkly above him against a moonlit sky. With that landmark as a guide, he knew that he could find Bradfield's Forge. An hour's riding would take him around the mountain.

CHAPTER II.

SAYVILLE ATTACKS.

SAYVILLE pulled himself up to an iron balcony for or five feet above the ground and looked through a long casement window. He saw a high room, gleaming with white woodwork,

book lined. A man with a great mane of gray hair sat at ease in a wing chair and read aloud under the light of a candelabrum. Beside him a girl on a tasseled stool bent over a sampler frame while she listened.

The voice rolled on, holding Sayville in a pleasant spell by its sonorous English and clear enunciation, deep with feeling. Suddenly the listener realized that the old man was reading Latin, and translating as he read. Sayville was near enough to glimpse the large print of the volume, and the memory of his not so long past school days told him what he was hearing. Hannibal was addressing his army after having crossed the Alps into Italy.

"Here, soldiers, where you have first met the enemy, you must conquer or die; and the same fortune which has imposed the necessity of fighting holds out to you, if victorious, rewards than which men are not wont to desire greater, even from the immortal gods!"

The old man closed the book, and put it down on a table. Sayville crouched lower, wondering. Had he come to the wrong house? Was this the Wolf of Cobble Hill, reading Livy to his daughter in a room filled with peace and quiet? Or was the Wolf taking a text from the great Carthaginian for his own guidance?

The girl lifted her head. Her cluster of brown ringlets, caught up with a ribbon, fell back, and Sayville saw her face.

She certainly was the daughter of this man, for they owned the same sparkling, dark blue eyes. The face of the father was craggy, powerful, worn and shaped by time, but under the delicate curves of the girl's cheek and chin there was a hint of the same strength.

She held up the sampler for her fa-

ther to see: ruffles at her elbow dropped away from round, white arms. She smiled.

"I shall sign it 'Janice Bradfield' in small letters of shaded blue wool," she said. "Or should I let my great-great-grandchildren guess who worked the text?"

Luther Bradfield raised shoulders as broad as Sayville's own and read aloud from the frame.

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength," sign it, my child. But be sure that if it survives to your great-great-grandchildren they will think it trumpery. They will be concerned with newfangled fol-de-rols, and quietness will be lost.

"We are at the beginning of the end, what with boats propelled by steam and such devilish contraptions. The end of peace!"

"Aye," replied the girl, "and they say there is a new dance called the waltz—"

"Huh!" snorted Bradfield, and got to his feet as though the very name of the new dance had been a prod in his flesh. He straightened to a good six feet four and as he did so his face turned toward the window. He became rigid, with his blue eyes darkening to black, and Rufus Sayville knew that he had not kept far enough back in the shadows.

SAYVILLE stepped over to the window sill with a pistol in each hand. Bradfield's fists clenched. The girl sprang up with a cry and stood beside her father. Thus the three faced each other for a long moment. Sayville advanced and took a stand with his back to the wall, where he could watch the doors of the room as well as the man and girl.

"Perhaps you will explain this in-

trusion?" said Bradfield in an icy voice. "Is it robbery?"

"You are Luther Bradfield?" asked Sayville. "Ironmaster?"

"Yes."

"I arrived by packet at Bessboro today," said Sayville, and he introduced himself. "On my way into the mountains I was attacked. Charles Goodroe, another ironmaster, came to my rescue and I dined at his house. There I was made prisoner by ruffians who forced their way in. I escaped, and I am led to believe that my captors were men in your employ, Mr. Bradfield!"

Father and daughter exchanged glances.

"And so you have come here!" exclaimed Bradfield. "For what purpose?"

"To make you a hostage, sir!" barked Sayville.

"That is good strategy," admitted Bradfield. "Just how would I have benefited by making a prisoner of a man with whom I hope to deal?"

"By forcing me to buy your iron. I've been told that you are called the Wolf of Cobble Hill."

"The Wolf of Cobble Hill is the man with whom you dined this evening," replied Bradfield calmly. "He might better be called a fox. Of course this is at present a matter of my word against his, and I would suggest that we let events prove the truth. They will."

Suddenly Rufus Sayville felt very young. The very odor of truth was about this man and in his home so that it was impossible not to believe him. And while he sought for words to express something of what he felt a medley of sounds came in out of the night. Horsemen were pounding up to the front entrance of the house.

"I think you'll soon learn, sir," remarked Bradfield, "who is the Wolf."

Sayville shoved his pistols inside his lowcut waistcoat.

"I am already convinced, sir."

"Father!" cried the girl. "Come to the stables and ride. We can't tell how far Goodroe will go with this. He is desperate for money."

"I do not run from my own house," replied the old man steadily. "Sir, will you take my daughter down to the forge, where she will be safe with the men of the night shift?"

"He will not!" The girl's eyes blazed. "He may save his own precious hide if he likes, but I stay here."

A fist thundered against the front door of the house but to Sayville it was for the moment remote and unimportant. Janice Bradfield's spirit warmed him like the glow of a fire. For the first time since he had come ashore he knew an emotion other than contempt for the greed with which he had found himself confronted.

"I have an account to settle with a man called Buck Horn," he said quietly. "So if Mr. Bradfield will permit, I'll stay here."

A gleam of friendliness came into the eyes of Luther Bradfield. He led the way out of the library and through a gracious, dimly lighted hallway. The big door was shivering now under a rain of blows.

Bradfield approached it with unhurried steps.

Sayville dropped back a few feet, expecting a rush, and drew his pistols. And he stepped in front of the girl, to block her from following her father. A heavy bolt rattled back. The door seemed to fall inward. The big rectangle of the doorway was filled with the red glare of torchlight and the crowding forms of men.

FOR a moment the commanding figure of Luther Bradfield stopped the rush. Buck Horn was there, in the forefront, looking in that weird light neither like man nor beast. Bradfield held up his hand and the crowding and the hoarse shouts stopped.

"What do you men want?" he demanded.

"We came for the gennelman there," growled Horn. "Him that got away from us."

"He is a guest in this house!" roared Bradfield. "Get away from here, you sweepings!"

Horn took one step over the threshold. Bradfield swung forward as lightly as a man half his years and his mighty arm went out in a pile driver blow. Horn was lifted from his feet and hurled back among the men behind. The impact sent them reeling. Then an orange flash came out of the night and a bullet ripped a long splinter from the bannister rail beside Janice.

That danger to her decided Sayville's part in the fight. Instead of charging Horn's men, he fired point blank into the dark mass outside. A scream filled the hall and the knot of men dissolved as though at the touch of a magic wand.

"Go upstairs!" cried Sayville. "Both of you!"

Bradfield looked at his daughter and yielded his determination not to run. He swept her into his arms and bounded up the winding staircase. Sayville followed more slowly, half turned to watch the doorway. A bullet crashed into the chandelier, hung with glittering crystal. Then the voice of Horn rose, spitting curses.

"Don't shoot!" he bellowed. "He ain't no good to nobody dead. Get to-

gether and we'll rush 'em. Block the back stairs, wherever they be!"

The men came in with a rush, Horn at their head. They took cover in the doorways and under the spiral staircase where they could not be reached by a possible bullet from above.

In the upper hall Sayville whispered, "Is there any way out of the house except by the stairs?"

"Over the kitchen roof," answered Bradfield reluctantly. "I never thought to be driven from my own house by such vermin, but we'll have to go."

As they ran toward the rear of the building a door opened and a fat woman in a nightcap rushed at them.

"Lord save us!" she panted. "What has happened, Mr. Bradfield?"

"Go up into the attic, cook," ordered Bradfield. "You and the two girls. Those fellows downstairs will leave as soon as they find that we've escaped."

Then the old man led the way through a window, onto a gently sloping roof of shingles. Sayville found himself holding the hands of Janice as he guided her through the darkness; he lowered her gently to the waiting arms of her father.

"You will take refuge with us at my forge, sir," said Bradfield. "And come daylight we'll see what can be done about this outrage."

THEY ran down across the velvet lawn, with the shouts of the searchers in the house drifting after them. Sayville found his horse tied in the thick undergrowth where he had hidden him. Janice rode easily, despite the lack of a side saddle, with her father and Sayville running beside the horse and holding stirrup leather.

They headed toward a rosy glow against the sky; a glow that turned into a mushroom of red light as they

drew near to it. And then they were in a great, cavernous shed which was the three fire Catalan forge of Luther Bradfield. The undershot waterwheel turned with a great but subdued thunder; the mighty hammer rose and fell against a crimson ingot of iron. A man rode an enormous pair of tongs, chained to the roof timbers, and with the tongs turned the ingot under the hammer.

The hammerman, a gnarled and powerful man of middle years, looked and saluted the ironmaster, but the work did not cease. Luther Bradfield stepped forward in the yellow lantern light, and waited for the billet to be finished. Then the clatter and rumble of the wheel stopped and the hammer remained motionless. Bradfield lifted his hand and called to the hammerman.

"Jim, I want to speak to you."

At that instant Janice cried out behind him and pulled at his arm.

"Mr. Sayville's gone! Disappeared! He isn't in the forge!"

BUCK HORN'S stomach was creased by the edge of a deal table; his monumental form spilled over the sides of a hard bottom chair while the little glittering eyes which were set deep in his scared face followed the movements of Mr. Charles Goodroe. The ironmaster paced the room and struck viciously at the leg of his nankeen breeches. But for the boot underneath he would have been black and blue.

Goodroe was furious, and Horn was sullen. The big man reached across the table and drank directly from the neck of a bottle. He wiped his mouth and felt tenderly of the lump on his jaw, which was a souvenir from his meeting with Luther Bradfield.

"You bungled!" snarled Goodroe. "Not to be able to take one man with a dozen! The very devil's in this affair. I arrange a holdup so that I can rescue him and throw the blame on Bradfield, and that's bungled too! Why, the man practically rescued himself!"

"You said yourself that he was all steel and whalebone, after you see him smash that chair," grumbled Horn. "We ain't bungled. He's bungled us, that's what. Two more of my men is downstairs with bullets in 'em, besides the one today. As soon as the sawbones gets here and starts probing you will hear 'em yell, and that ain't going to set well in the bellies of the others. They ain't no bullets in you, Mr. Goodroe!"

"Enough of that," barked Goodroe. "If I dared show myself at Bradfield's house Sayville wouldn't have slipped through my fingers. And I couldn't afford to be found here with you. Do many know that you have your headquarters here?"

Buck Horn's glance traveled over the cracked plaster and cobwebby corners of the bare room, and he chuckled.

"Lots know it, and that's a good thing. Nobody dast to come down this old road. For why? Because Buck Horn's men hang out here. 'Most everybody knows that."

"Never mind bragging," Goodroe snapped. "I want you to raid Bradfield's forge for me tonight and pick this man up. They certainly went there for protection. There was no other place for them to go."

Horn patted the bulge in his shirt where Sayville's gold reposed.

"When you told me I could have what I found on him you kind of made a mistake. I got some pretty good pay

already today. Raiding them forge men ain't going to be no joke."

"How much do you want?" demanded Goodroe.

"I ain't going to chance getting my head broke for nothing. For five hundred dollars I'll deliver the gennelman right here in this room, hog tied and not much damaged."

Goodroe had stopped pacing to lean against the casing of a window, whence a little breeze stirred the musty air of the chamber. Horn was looking directly at him, now that he had mustered courage to stand out for a sum that would take the ache out of a score of broken heads.

Suddenly Horn lifted a big paw, passed it before his eyes, and looked again. Something strange was happening to Charles Goodroe. A choking sound came from him; then his mouth opened and stretched to a cavern. But no more sound came. His hands beat the air in a futile attempt to reach for his pistols. He went limp inside his smart coat of blue broadcloth. His legs wobbled under him, but, surprisingly, he did not fall.

THEN Buck Horn saw that two corded, bare forearms had come in at the window and that Goodroe's black satin stock was blotted out by muscular hands which had shut off his breath. The ironmaster's face filled with dark blood. His tongue protruded. Slowly his body rose from the floor with legs dangling, and he was pulled backward into the night.

Horn seized the bottle with sweat beaded hands and let a stream of rum run down his throat. He had taken a forward step, still grasping the bottle, when something came in through the window where Goodroe had vanished. It hit the floor lightly and re-

solved itself into a slim waisted young man; a man who had discarded coat and waistcoat and neckcloth and rolled the sleeves of his ruffled shirt shoulder high. He came forward with the feet of a dancer.

Sayville sidestepped to the door and shot the bolt. He dodged the bottle that Horn hurled at him. His lips were parted in a grin of pleasurable anticipation. He met a bull-like rush with a straight left arm and smashed Buck Horn's nose to a pulp. For the moment Horn was completely blinded.

"London prize ring rules?" asked Sayville, stepping close to him. "Or no rules at all?"

He hit Horn in the stomach, with everything behind the blow and doubled him over; then he straightened the hulk up with an uppercut and jackknifed him again with a second stomach punch. There wasn't an ounce of strength left in the mighty arms of Buck Horn, and little or no sight in his streaming eyes.

Sayville got him on the hip and hurled him into a corner. The building shuddered to the crash of that weight. Then Sayville ripped the chamois belt out of Horn's shirt front and buckled it around his own waist.

Horn, no more than half conscious, tried to crawl on his hands and knees. A blow cracked the panel of the door. Another drove the panel in and Sayville glimpsed a human face. A gun barrel slipped through the opening and he jumped back as the room filled with sound.

A square yard of plaster cracked. Sayville drew his pistols and fired one of them at the door. He jumped to another position and waited. A groan came from outside.

To Sayville's surprise, the voice of Goodroe, cracked and tortured, came

from behind the door. The ironmaster had had a choking and a fall which should have kept him quiet for a time, but he evidently was of tougher fiber than he appeared to be.

"You deserved that, you fool. The man in there's no good, to me dead. Get an ax or a plank, some of you."

Sayville sprang to a window and thrust head and shoulders outside. A lance of fire stabbed upward through the night and the casing above his head splintered. He jumped back as a second shot furrowed the wall.

His retreat was effectively cut off, even if those riflemen below were not trying to kill him. A bullet through an arm or a leg would bring him down and suit Goodroe's purpose equally well.

Sayville looked desperately around the room. There were windows only on one side. The door, presumably leading into a corridor, faced them, and the other two walls were blank. But overhead there was a square opening in the ceiling, fitted with a cover of boards.

GRUNTING and low voiced curses came from the corridor.

That meant another attack. Sayville snatched a candle from the wall and pushed the table under the trap. He sprang to the table top, knocked up the board cover with a pistol butt and held up the candle. A roomy attic was above him. The dormer windows there gave him hope, and certainly the attic was the place for a last stand.

Sayville started to draw himself up just as the door crashed inward and yelling men filled the room. One of his dangling legs was caught. He kicked a man in the face with the other foot and lifted himself. On the attic floor he squirmed around and emptied his sec-

and pistol. One of Horn's men fell backward from the table and rolled on the floor. The others scattered out of range.

Sayville considered quickly.

There would be a little respite now while they planned their attack. Sayville set his candle far back from the trap and, lying on his stomach, edged around the opening until he had succeeded in getting a view of nearly the whole room. He saw them get Horn and the wounded man out in a hurry. Then the voice of Goodroe came from a point beyond Sayville's range of vision.

"Jules," he ordered, "take a couple of men and stay here. You boys can use your knives on him if you have to, in case he comes down. But he's safe now. I'll have him out of there inside of ten minutes."

The confidence in the voice of Goodroe did not sound at all good to the prisoner in the attic. He retreated to the windows and examined them. There were four at the front of the house, but they opened on a roof so steep that only a squirrel could have climbed up to the ridgepole or down to the eaves.

The candle was far enough back so that it would not outline Sayville's form against the window and thus his view of the moonlit night was clear. Trees surrounded the house, growing close, and some of the ancient elms rose high over the ridgepole. He peered to see whether there might be a point of contact with a limb and while he looked in vain a strange thing happened.

Down from a mighty limb of one of the tallest elms a dark object began to descend into air. It seemed like a gigantic black spider, letting itself down by means of an invisible thread.

Pantalooned legs kicked the air and then hung straight as the downward progress halted.

Slowly the figure began to swing. At the end of a rope, of course, which could not be seen in the moonlight. The dark body swung very slowly at first. Then it gained momentum. It was sweeping toward the nearest window of the attic.

So that was what Goodroe had meant when he said he would have Sayville down within ten minutes. They would take him by surprise from a window and perhaps at the same time make an attack through the trap.

Sayville ran to the opening and looked down into the room he had left, but as yet there were no signs of danger there. He set the candle where it would reveal a head and shoulders coming up into the attic and then hurried back to the window nearest the swinging human form outside.

He heard feet touch the shingles softly. There was silence through another swing. Then came a faint, gasping cry, and a struggle. A moment later the moonlight was blotted out as something crouched on the broad sill of the dormer and worked at the fastenings of the windows. They swung inward, and the blot dissolved into the room.

Sayville pounced. A strangled yelp came from the heap under him and just as he realized that this which he had pinned to the floor was no man, pain seared one of his hands. It was a woman, and she had bitten him. He had had his face buried in her hair for an instant. A faint delicious odor filled his nostrils. He untangled himself, stunned, as a voice panted at him out of the semi-darkness.

"Is that . . . the way . . . to treat a lady?"

CHAPTER III.

WOMAN'S LOGIC.

THEN he knew. That was the voice of Janice Bradfield, and cold horror took him when he realized what she had done to herself.

"You...you..." He could not find any words.

"I know!" she exclaimed, sitting up. "I'm not a lady! I always was a tom-boy, but if I hadn't been I never could have climbed that elm."

Her voice broke in a sob. Sayville lifted her to her feet and found his own.

"Miss Bradfield," he said, "what you've done is—wonderful—but insane! Goodroe has two prisoners now instead of one. He can bring your father to terms."

"I didn't mean it to be that way," she told him. "I'm supposed to be in bed in the hammerman's house, but it seemed as though I'd go mad doing nothing. I know this place and I was sure you had left us to find Buck Horn. If anything went wrong and you were captured I thought I might help from the outside. So I went home for my horse, borrowed some clothes from the stable boy, and when I remembered the elms I brought a coil of rope."

"For I knew I could never get into the house from the ground. I really did have a little sense in the beginning. The rope was tied around my waist and I was going to keep an end and get us both out from one of these windows."

"After I heard the shots and saw the light here I knew you were in trouble. But the rope wasn't quite long enough. I had to swing at the very end and it slipped out of my hands before I got a good hold on the sill. So—so I failed."

"But why?" cried Sayville, frantically. "For me—"

She laughed.

"Let us say because you're such a homely man, Mr. Sayville. And a good fighter."

Sayville was saved the necessity of replying. For suddenly they both coughed. He realized that his lungs were smarting. The light of the candle was dimmed by a thick column of smoke that rolled upward into the attic. Sayville ran down the long room and slammed the cover over the trap. The next instant it was driven upward by the end of a board. He reeled away, strangling, and sprang to the windows to fling them open. But there was not a breath of air stirring in that calm night. And a rifle cracked spitefully from the ground. The room would fill with that thick, resinous smoke and the end would be suffocation.

Sayville groaned. He would not try to fight his way out through the room below and leave Janice Bradfield here. If he could create a diversion in some fashion...to make them stop the smoke. He thought wildly of flinging himself from a window. If they had him—A sudden flash of thought, born of desperation, suggested a possibility. He seized Janice by the arm and pulled her to the candlelight. Her face was contorted as she struggled for breath, with a dainty handkerchief over mouth and nose.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Sayville fervently. "You put the stable boy's clothes on over your own!"

"Over most of my own!" she gasped.

"Take them off," he ordered. "And as many of your own as you can spare. Hurry!"

She obeyed without question and shrank deeper into the shadows. Say-

ville did not glance her way. With all the will that was in him he was driving his hands to a task on which their one chance of escape depended.

HE turned to Janice only when he made a rough dummy from the breeches that she had worn, and his own shirt. That white blot would show up in the night. It was well for his task that the fully dressed young lady of 1820 wore many layers of clothing. For even now, when Janice stood bereft of everything that the modesty of that period could spare, his dummy was flabby from lack of proper stuffing. But it would do.

Seconds were now the essence of success or failure. Sayville was staggering and half blind. Janice crouched with her head near the floor, where the air was a little better. The light of the candle had become a mere red spot in the thick atmosphere. Sayville took up the candlestick and reeled to a window.

A shout went up from below. They were waiting for this moment. A bullet crashed through a swinging sash beside him. Heedless of that, Sayville leaned far out until his eyes cleared a little. Another rifle spoke below and a shingle cracked in the roof at his elbow. He chose a bushy maple tree which rose close to the eaves and hurled the dummy outward with all his strength.

It did have something of the appearance of a man jumping as it sailed down into the branches of the tree. It hung there, swaying a little as he had hoped it would. There would be fifteen seconds, or perhaps half a minute, before they discovered that Sayville was not inside that shirt and breeches.

From the clamor he thought that there must be twenty or thirty men in

the pack that gathered round the tree. But there was not a second to waste in waiting to see what would happen. He had them out of the house for a brief moment and this was his one chance.

Sayville snatched the helpless girl up into his arms and ran to the trap. It seemed that his knees had turned to water; fire filled his throat and lungs, and when he reached the trap he had to feel with his feet for the opening. Each breath was a coughing groan. He laid the girl on the floor and swung down with arms suddenly grown weak.

When his body was halfway through the trap his feet suddenly met resistance, and he knew that he was standing on fire. His bootsoles became agony. He kicked with all the power that was left in him. Something went to the floor of the room below with a jar that shook the house. And then Sayville's tortured feet had a firm surface under them. He reached for Janice and dragged her limp body down.

He dropped from the table that had been under him and stood helpless for a moment, with Janice in his arms. A great iron kettle had been set on the table and filled with fire. Now the kettle lay on its sides and coals were spilled out over the floor. Little spurts of flame were already leaping up from the boards.

This room also was filling with smoke. But Sayville's eyes and lungs had had a little chance to clear and a measure of power came back to him. He went reeling out where the smashed door had been, along a corridor, down what was evidently the back stairway. They were under the moon flooded heavens, with freedom no farther away than the dark line of the woods at the rear of the house.

Confused shouts came from the front of the building. It sounded to Sayville as though they were encouraging someone to climb the tree into which he had dropped the dummy. He sat Janice on her feet. She was able to stand, to take a few steps as soon as her lungs filled with the clean night air.

His own strength grew. He lifted her again and started for the forest. And then, a hundred yards from safety, Sayville's effort was lost for lack of a few more precious seconds.

A HOWL of rage came from the man-hunters. That meant that they had got the dummy down. The bellow of Buck Horn rose above every other voice as he shouted orders to surround the house. Dark figures came running around each end of the building. A triumphant yell told that one of the men had seen Sayville.

"Can you run?" he whispered to Janice.

"Yes, now I can."

"Then get to your horse and ride. They don't know you're here and they will concentrate on me. They won't see you."

With a push he sent her staggering toward the woods and whirled around. Half a dozen dim figures were coming, at varying distances. Sayville ran straight at the nearest man and leaped aside just as they were going to come together. He thrust out a foot. The man went down with a thud. Sayville kicked him in the ribs and heard a bone snap.

Before the next man he dropped suddenly and let him go over his back. There wasn't time to put this one out of the fighting, for a third enemy was on him. But Sayville took a swift backward glance and believed he had ac-

complished his purpose. There was no spot of white between him and the woods. Janice had escaped.

The third man took Sayville to the ground, but a knee in the groin disposed of him. Sayville was up again before another could reach him. But now they seemed to be as thick as swarming bees. They had spread out as they rounded the house. They were on all sides, closing in, and only the way toward the house was clear.

The great form of Horn loomed among his men as Sayville dashed for the doorway from which he had come out into the night. There he turned and stood at bay, and for a moment the pack that was closing in hesitated. There were as many as he had guessed, or more, and they were roused to a pitch of fury that at first he did not understand.

Then a strange quality that had come into the moonlight revealed what Sayville, in the heat of battle, had not noticed. The upper windows of the house were sending a red glare out to mingle with the silver of the moon. The stronghold of Buck Horn was burning from the fire that he himself had kindled. Charles Goodroe was here, hovering back of Horn's men, but he would not be able to save the quarry alive. These maddened ruffians were closing in for a kill on their own account.

Sayville thought many things in the brief respite that was his. He had no hope of life now. He could not hold this doorway long against a mob, and without a weapon. There was no refuge inside save a fiery death. Before he could get through the unfamiliar building and out at the front they could go around and meet him, and he would be trapped.

Curiously, he had little animosity

against Horn, now that he had beaten the man and taken his gold back. It was against Charles Goodroe that all the bitterness of this moment rushed. It was Goodroe who had endangered Janice, who had inspired all the evil that had blossomed in this ugly flower of death.

Suddenly Sayville knew that he was not going to wait for the attack that was coming. He was going to make an attack of his own and it was going to succeed. When he had punished with his own hands the greatest criminal of all those before him then he could die with a feeling that some good had come out of his own end.

LIKE a stone from a catapult, Sayville leaped from the steps before the door. The straight blow that his left hand had learned so thoroughly cracked against the face of the first man he met with a sound that rose above the clamor. Sayville dropped to a knee and caught a man who sprang for him with a crotch and neck hold. He stood up and heaved that body against the head and shoulders of Buck Horn himself.

Then Sayville struck blindly, for the press was so thick that no blow could fail to find a target. He knew that fists reached him, that a club glanced from his head, but he did not feel the pain. For he was indifferent to everything save the human objective toward which he fought steadily. Goodroe danced just beyond the knot of fighting men with his riding crop lifted for a chance to strike.

Hands clutched at Sayville's legs. He trampled on a face. They were going to bear him down! No, not yet! That giant who had locked his arms around Sayville yielded to stiff fingers thrust

into his eyes. A little space cleared. Sayville lowered his head and went forward like a battering ram. A chin cracked against his skull. Goodroe's crop missed his head and landed on his shoulder. And then he had the ironmaster in his arms.

He reeled around in time to let Goodroe take a blow with a club that had been aimed at him. His arms settled around Goodroe's neck in a strangle-hold and his thoughts as he at last went down was that the Wolf of Cobble Hill would do no more harm. For they would never be able to break that strangle-hold in time to save the ironmaster.

Sayville no longer tried to protect himself as booted feet thudded against his body. He lay holding Goodroe close, with his mind centered upon his victory in death. His own blood was in his mouth, trickling into his eyes. It took a long time to kill a tough man.

He wished they would end it with a pistol shot, but that would not be brutal enough to satisfy them now.

Suddenly something was missing. Through Sayville's blurred consciousness came slowly the realization that he was no longer taking punishment. Had they left him for dead? He must have been near it, for his hold on Goodroe was broken. Yes, the man lay so that his darkened face was close to Sayville's own. Over them both played a red glare.

But there was still fighting, and now there were shots. Or was he dreaming in delirium? He managed to raise his head, get himself to an elbow. It seemed that he saw a hundred men where there had been only twoscore or less. Then a slender white apparition, red tinged, came running, and

Janice Bradfield was kneeling beside him.

She lifted his head, sobbing.

"You're alive!" she cried. "Oh, that's all I asked! To find him alive!"

"What's happened?" asked Sayville wearily.

"I came back!" she told him, as she began to wipe the blood from his face. "I went into the house from the front and found a rifle. But before I could get to you with it you made that mad charge. Then I fired as soon as I could see you, and that turned them to me. Then my father and the forge men came—"

She looked up at a dignified form standing above them. Bradfield glanced aside at Goodroe, bent down and poked him with the muzzle of a horse pistol.

Goodroe stirred and groaned.

"By taking this man, Mr. Sayville," said Bradfield, "you have done the ironmasters of the Adirondacks a service that can scarcely be repaid."

"I am paid already," said Sayville, as Janice helped him to sit up. And it seemed to him that both she and her father knew that he was thinking of her, whose slim hands were tearing strips of cloth from a petticoat to bind up his head.

"She ought," said Bradfield, "to be properly spanked! For getting into this mess herself!"

"I guessed where Mr. Sayville was," she told the statuesque old man, "and I wanted to make sure you'd come as fast as horseflesh could travel. I knew what you'd do if I were here. And that's why I sent the stable boy to tell you that I'd gone to Buck Horn's place myself!"

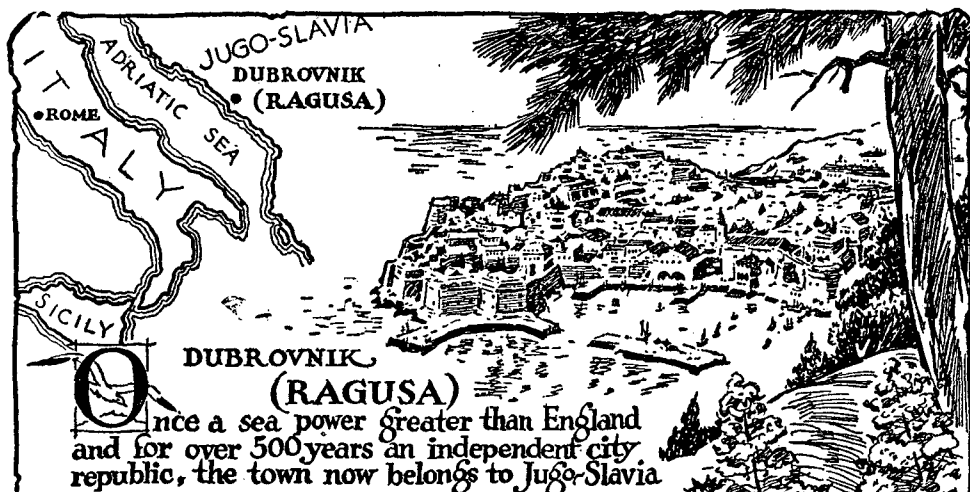
THE END

A Burglar Who Believed in Signs

THREE times in one month the F. W. Woolworth Company store on East Washington Street in Phoenix, Arizona, had been entered and pilfered by burglars. The thieves had done considerable damage to the safe in the office by blowing off the doors with nitroglycerin. Finally J. S. Kerr, the store manager, evolved a plan to save the safe at least. He had a neat sign made which read: "We Put Our Money in the Bank," and he placed it on top of the safe. A short time later the store was entered again by burglars. When Kerr entered the store the following morning he found his sign still in its place on top of the safe, the safe intact and carefully printed in ink on the bottom of the sign was the terse inscription: "O. K."

—James Joyce.



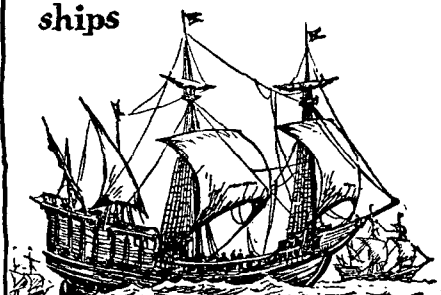


DUBROVNIK (RAGUSA)
 Once a sea power greater than England and for over 500 years an independent city republic, the town now belongs to Jugo-Slavia.

WHERE *the* WORD ARGOSY COMES FROM



In 1588, a Ragusan fleet fought with the Spanish Armada and lost 12 of its finest ships



Fifteenth Century Ragusan Carracks, called by the English 'RAGUSIES'

RAGUSA, now known as Dubrovnik, is situated on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. For over five hundred years she was a city republic, one of the great mercantile ports of the world. At one time the most important rival of Venice, Ragusa was actually a greater power on the sea than England. Unwarlike and primarily concerned with trade, Ragusan ship owners paid for "protection" from pirate vessels—an early form of racketeering.

Ragusa's great carracks, laden with rich goods from the Levant, were a familiar sight in the ports of Europe and Africa, and in the Sixteenth Century her trade extended to India and America. Ragusan sailors served under the flags of many other countries, and it is almost certain that several were on Columbus's ships when he discovered America. Ragusan ships were seen in California even before the advent of the first Yankee vessel.

For over a century all Levantine goods were brought to England by Ragusans, and the English sailors soon began to call a ship owned and manned by Ragusans a "ragusy." Eventually the spelling of the word was corrupted into "argosy," which to-day means simply "any richly laden ship."

ILLUSTRATION BY

Perique

By DENNIS LAWTON

Perique knew it was Kohala



No man on the island of Tupia could be sure where his neighbor stood—and a stranger like Jim Parry was a constant object of suspicion

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

NO sooner had Jim Parry settled himself in the little village of Tupia, in the Lanua Isles, when he is confronted by Captain Wilshire of the local constabulary with a murder charge. Parry immediately clears himself through Captain Ellis, who had been present at the card game which Parry offers as an alibi.

Some time later, Jackie, a Lanuan half-breed, has his brains dashed out while he is peering through the office windows of Matthew Coffee, local trader. Just before he was murdered by the unknown assailant, he had seen a man inside examining a pearl "as large as a pigeon's egg."

Jim Parry meets Nancy Lee, who lost her father on the sinking of the ship Nancy Lee, at a party given by Coffee. She tells him that she knows he is Perique, the South Seas adventurer. Meanwhile Captain Ellis is discovered murdered near the safe in Coffee's office. And the large pearl is missing!

In the meantime The Flying Spray has steamed

into Tupia Harbor, barely getting into port safely through the fog, for the light on Nihoni Point had been extinguished. On board the ship was Benedict Lawson with a letter from the Commissioner of Kandava definitely identifying Parry as Perique. But the brother of Konia, on pretext of taking Lawson to Wilshire, leads him through the forest—where he is relieved of the letter.

Lieutenant Clifford of the local constabulary goes to investigate the Nihoni lighthouse, and finds that its keeper, Tom Washburn, has been murdered.

Konia, the native girl who has become attached to Parry, tells Nancy that Parry will not live with her because she is yellow. Meanwhile Lieutenant Clifford tries to piece together the clues and evidence which point to Parry. And Nancy, offering Parry a chance to escape, proposes that he take Konia away with him. Soon after the captain and his aids go to interview Parry at his quarters.

This story began in the Argosy for December 14

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRAIGHT STORY.

THE captain was in a stern mood. He said: "Hendricks, watch this man Barry. The rest of you come with me."

And he walked straight on into the long, cool room of Perique.

Perique said: "The strong hand, captain, eh? Searching without a search-warrant?"

The captain turned, glared at him, and disappeared through the door. Perique began to laugh.

He said: "Sit down, Hendricks. I'm not going to fly away."

Hendricks wiped his red, sweating face on the heel of his palm and answered: "I don't come inside of hand-reach of you, Mr. Parry. If you got any funny ideas in your head about tricking me, I got to remind you that there's six shots inside of this gun and I was raised not to waste good ammunition."

"Spoken like a good Britisher," said Perique.

"It's the kind of talk that a Yankee can understand," said Hendricks.

"What are they searching for in my room?" asked Perique.

"Chicken feed. I dunno what," said Hendricks.

Perique lighted a cigarette, leaned back in his chair, and sipped the rum.

"A blue sea, and a clear sky, and a cool wind, and a lot of sticky hot British constabularies—that's what I need to make a good day of it," he said, when Captain Wilshire appeared with a gloomy face, his two men trooping behind him.

"Find the papers, brother?" asked Perique.

The captain said: "We'll have to stay here for a time. Lieutenant Clifford is coming up the hill to see you, Parry, and we may as well hold you for him."

"Sorry I haven't more chairs," said Perique. "But sit down on the grass. It won't stain your whites—not very much."

"You think you're the cat with the

cream," said the captain angrily, "but I think you're going to have trouble, Parry. Big trouble and lots of it. Here's Lieutenant Clifford now."

The lieutenant came up the terrace looking pale rather than red. The climate was not suitable to him; it stole the strength out of his heart, this humid warmth plus any physical exertion. But his eyes were as bright as polished steel.

He gave Perique a short salute. Then he rested a hand on the edge of the table and said: "Mr. Parry, you went out in a small boat to-day. Where did you go?"

"Across the bay," said Perique.

"Did you land?"

"I went ashore for a few minutes on the other side."

"What made you go ashore?"

"Being tired of the sea, lieutenant."

"At what place did you beach the boat?"

"I don't remember. Where there was some white sand."

"That doesn't answer."

"I'm sorry."

"Did you go outside the bay?"

Perique looked at him for half a second.

"What are you driving at, Clifford?" he asked.

"You landed on the point of the island," said Clifford.

"That's true."

"After you got ashore, what were you doing?"

AGAIN Perique narrowed his eyes a little. "I was following an old trail that I found on the beach," he said.

"An old trail? What old trail?"

"The sort of a trail that feet leave."

"Will you answer me frankly?"

"I'll answer you."

"Where did the trail lead?" asked the lieutenant.

"Up the hill on a zigzag," said Perique.

"Why should you have followed it?"

"I don't know. Curious to see whether or not I still had an eye for sign."

"Ah?" said the lieutenant. "After zig-zagging, what did you come to?"

"Nothing important."

"Not some smoke and firestains on rock, covered by other rocks?"

"Now that you mention it, I believe I did."

"Afterwards you went where?"

"Down to the shore." Once more the eye of Perique glittered as he studied the lieutenant. "I followed the old trail some more. The footprints were quite dim . . ."

"Yes, I believe you. Quite dim," murmured the lieutenant.

"And so back into my boat and I paddled with the run of the tide up the mouth of the left hand channel towards Tupia Bay."

"Did you go on through?"

"I remembered what I'd heard about reefs in the shallows. When I saw the water turn green, I decided to take a look at the reef. So I slipped into the water and took the look. The reef looked as dangerous as a shark. I decided not to take any possible chances—the least touch of a rock would have split my little canoe open from end to end—and so I turned about and rounded the island and came back through the main channel."

"What the devil is all this about, Clifford?" asked the captain.

Clifford did not even answer, so intent was he on ferreting away at the secret of Perique.

"You went down to the beach from the spoked rocks, and on the beach you lifted another large and heavy stone, Mr. Parry," said the lieutenant.

"I did. But there was nothing under it except some old tin."

"And that had no meaning to you?"

"Why should it? There's plenty of tin on all the beaches of the Islands in this century."

"Shall I tell you what that tin had been used for?" asked Clifford.

"Go ahead."

"Parry, there's no use trying to hold out. I have a complete case against you. A perfect case!"

"Go ahead with it," said Perique. "I like the way you talk."

"I'll begin with one other bit of evidence that will amuse you—and you, Captain Wilshire. At that place where Parry stopped his canoe and slipped into the water for a look at the reef, he wanted to see—and in fact he *did* see—far down in the water, the hull of a ship with its bow smashed in. . . . The ship is the wreck of the Nancy Lee!"

"Ha . . . Clifford!" cried the captain.

"I had my boys dive down to the wreck," said the lieutenant. "One of 'em got a life-belt off the rail and brought it to the surface. Nancy Lee was written on the belt."

"But the Nancy Lee sank far out . . ." began the captain.

"Exactly," said the lieutenant. "The Nancy Lee *had* to sink far out to sea. It had to sink out there, and not through a devilish bit of plotting in the throat of the left channel, the north channel to Tupia Bay."

EXCITEMENT almost mastered the lieutenant. Perique pushed a chair towards him.

"Sit down, Clifford," he suggested. "You're full of shakes in a way that I'm sorry to see."

"I'll keep my feet under me," said Clifford. "Captain Wilshire, we ought to have this man in irons."

"I'll do it in a minute," said Wilshire, "if you can tell me what charge to put against him."

"Murder!" said the lieutenant. "Mass murder. One of the most horrible crimes that was ever committed. An entire ship's crew wiped out, in fact!"

"Give me one scrap of evidence," said the captain, "and I'll load him down with a hundredweight of tool-proof steel."

"Good," said Perique. "Now the evidence, Clifford. We want facts. The British lion can't be fed on fairy tales. Facts, lieutenant."

Clifford pointed a sudden finger at him. "How do you happen to have pearls to throw around by the handful?" he demanded.

"I didn't throw 'em around. I wanted to get rid of 'em," said Perique.

"Ah, you wanted to get rid of them?"

"They came from Ellis," said Perique.

"Go on," said the lieutenant.

"Ellis was one of the first people I met on Lanua, after I landed and reached the town. After I'd met him and we'd had a drink together, I happened to tell him that I'd been landed by the chief from Kandava. He asked me if I'd do him a favor. I told him that my favors always brought a pretty good price. He put a hand into a pocket and brought it out with a dozen or so little pearls in the hollow of his palm.

"I watched the light wallow around among 'em. Ellis told me that he wanted to have his appearance in Lanua explained. He wanted it explained by saying that old Kamakua had picked him up out of the sea from a bit of wreckage. Ellis gave me the pearls and I promised to back his story and keep my mouth shut."

"And then you wanted to get rid of the pearls later on?" asked the lieutenant, sharply.

"Yes, I did. The pearls had come from Ellis. Ellis is found dead. Naturally I didn't want the pearls found on me. So I gave them all to Konia."

"What about it, Clifford?" asked the captain. "Does that story sound straight, to you?"

"It *sounds* straight," said the lieutenant.

"It *is* straight," said Perique.

Clifford laughed, his voice squeaking up high and small. He was too tired. Excitement burned him up.

"I'll tell you exactly what happened," said Clifford. "And then you'll put this man in irons, captain."

"Glad to, as I said before," remarked the captain.

"I'll go back to the beginning," said the lieutenant.

"Once upon a time," suggested Perique, folding his hands behind his head. He closed his eyes, and drew in a great breath, then folded his arms across his chest and

began to stare at Clifford with unfathomable eyes.

CHAPTER XIX.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

"**M**URDER breeds and grows fast in lazy weather," said the lieutenant. "We hark back to a time when Ellis and James Parry met on some beach. The Nancy Lee was about to sail home. There were reasons why it should not be allowed to reach her port. All of these reasons don't appear. But there were plenty of good ones. For one thing, as Matthew Coffee has testified, there was a big pearl catch; a rich one. And the brain of Ellis hatched the idea.

"He would delay the sailing of the Nancy Lee. In the meantime, his partner in the intended crime—this fellow Parry—would hire passage on another boat, a native craft perhaps—that would be able to drop him by boat on the outer edge of Lanua without making the harbor at all."

"A boat from Kandava, for instance?" said the captain.

"A boat from Kandava, for instance," agreed the lieutenant. "But not one that landed him on the shore of Lanua when he says. Not at all. He had certain preparations to make before the Nancy Lee made harbor, here. As soon as he was on shore, he started to make them. They were simple, and surprising. He and Ellis were going to smash the Nancy Lee on the rocks of the north channel."

"How could they manage that?" asked the captain. "The lighthouse was out there marking Nihoni Point . . ."

"Suppose that the light on Nihoni Point was dark?" asked Clifford. "Suppose that the murderer of the ship first murdered poor old Tom Washburn and put out the lamps of the lighthouse?"

"Ah?" said the captain.

"Watch Parry's face!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

Perique poured rum into his glass until it was brimming. The liquor swelled up

above the edge, held from running over the edge by the filmy strength of its molecular attraction. That glass Perique lifted to his lips with a slow hand, steady as iron. He drank off half the contents.

"To your story, lieutenant!" said Perique.

"His nerves seem steady enough," muttered Captain Wilshire.

"The man who murdered Tom Washburn and then wrecked the *Nancy Lee* *had* to have good nerves," said the lieutenant. "Now mark how the thing happened. Washburn dead, the light out on Nihoni Point, and a ship running in under a dark sky towards Tupia Bay. Here's the devilish ingenuity—and yet the scheme was simple enough.

"He simply crossed in a small boat to the channel island and there, on a hill at a point about the same height as the lighthouse on the point, James Parry kindled a fire. To give the fire more brilliance and to make the light of it shine more steadily, he had arranged behind it some tin slabs that trebled the power of the fire and sheltered it from the wind at the same time.

"Now comes the poor *Nancy Lee*, sees the light, and takes the first open water to the north of it—the north channel, therefore, instead of the southern channel. The tide is running against her, but the trade is filling the sails. She bowls along at seven or eight knots. On board her, the sailors are a happy lot. Home is just ahead of them. And Captain Ellis is the happiest of all, because he has taken the cream of the pearl catch and hung it in a leather sack from his neck, under his coat.

"Then he slips over the side with a life preserver on and swims to the shore. In the meantime the poor little *Nancy Lee* is making full sail. There is a point of dark land ahead. When they round that, they expect to see the big, quiet width of Tupia Bay before them.

"Instead, there is a sudden line of white. What seemed only the song of the wind in the topmammer turns into a roar of the sea. They've rounded the point suddenly and

the devil is reaching for them out of the channel. The run of the tide and the whip of the wind is tearing the sea to white pieces on the reefs. There's no time to do anything.

"That's how other ships have been lost in the north channel and never a man got ashore to tell the story. The same thing happens now. The lookout barely has time to yell out, and then the ship strikes. The teeth of that reef would disembowel even a twenty thousand ton ship in thirty seconds.

"The *Nancy Lee* is ripped to bits and goes down. Some of the crew make a hard fight for it to get ashore. They could master the wind and waves, perhaps—a few of the strongest swimmers—but the waves smash them against the upper edges of the rocks. They go down in one swarm. They die, every man of 'em, Parry, and you did that multiple murder like the cold-blooded, cruel devil that you are."

"YOU talk like a poet," said Perique, "but you'll never put the irons on me with such a yarn as that, my friend. Too circumstantial, lieutenant. Too damned circumstantial, I'm afraid."

"Captain Wilshire," exclaimed the lieutenant, "I've told you the story as it happened. Are you going to get the irons on Parry?"

The captain, his eyes hypnotically fixed on the face of Perique, said slowly: "Ellis comes ashore. He has the catch with him. The whole cream of the pearl fishing. He meets James Parry. He makes a split of part of the pearls with him. But not all. Some of the biggest ones have to be marketed with more care than they can use. So Ellis goes to Matthew Coffee and turns over half the prize, say."

"Exactly so," said the lieutenant, "and tells the cock and bull story about being picked up out of the sea. Matthew Coffee rewards him heavily, or is about to reward him for heroism, etc. But the reward is not quite what Ellis wants. Or, in addition, he wants a bigger share of the pearls. Crime is in the air.

"He decides to rob the safe. Remember that James Parry was on land to help. Together they go to the offices, kill poor half-breed Jackie, get into the office of Coffee and Coffee, and operate on the safe.

"First they decide to undo the wall bolts and roll or carry the safe away, where they can beat it open at leisure without making noise that will be overheard. But the job seems long. One of them believes that the keys of Coffee might be stolen. He goes up the hill to the house. And remember that Parry and Ellis were seen at one time or another at Coffee's party, that night."

"They were! They were!" said the captain eagerly.

"That thickens it up a bit," nodded Perique. "Go ahead, lieutenant."

"He returns with the keys. The safe is already free from the wall, but the keys are better. It's Ellis who tries them. Note that Parry stands by. He's discovered that the safe is easily overbalanced. As the safe door swings open, Parry gives the safe a tug. A hard one. It crashes down on Ellis . . . and that leaves Parry with the whole plunder in his hands. Do you see the scene, captain?"

The captain moistened his dry lips with the point of his tongue and nodded, still staring at Perique.

"Clifford," he said at last, "it's a beautiful story. It's the truth. I feel in my bones that Parry is the guilty man. But there's not a single iota of evidence to put before a judge. Not a scrap of evidence on which the law could hold him. Circumstantial, Clifford. Nothing but a chain of circumstances, and every one of them imagined, not seen!"

"But I saw him with my own eyes today, returning to the island and then pausing at the burial place of the ship. The criminal returning to the scene of his crime!"

"True," said the captain, "or simply an idle man taking a canoe trip out of the bay of Tupia."

"Captain Wilshire, think of what you're saying! You're not going to let that man go free, are you? After I've put the story

of the entire crime on the table before him?" demanded the lieutenant.

"Give me a scruple, an iota, a single dot or dash of proof, and I'll have him in irons," said the captain. "Otherwise, for telling the whole story to his face, I will have to call you a very young man indeed! Or did you expect to break down his nerve? You might as well try to break steel with a wooden hammer."

Sweat was pouring down the white face of Clifford.

"The return to the island—going to the place where the rocks were fire-stained."

"It won't do. He says that he was following a trail. You haven't a dash of proof. He had a few small pearls. He gives them away to a girl. Find the rest of the loot and then I can believe you. Find a single crime ever lodged against him in the past and I'll hold him until we can try to work out this case. But as it is, Clifford, you've thrown away your brilliant work by the childish rashness with which you've used your tongue."

CHAPTER XX.

BANKRUPT.

IT was after siesta hour in the house of Matthew Coffee. That afternoon some of the best people in Tupia were gathered there. The governor was among them. Nancy Lee was there. Captain Wilshire of the constabulary was on hand, and there were a dozen others. Matthew Coffee served tea in his "cool-room."

It was an ingenious device carved into the solid rock of the bluff which supported the house and its wandering courts. One approached it down a winding stairs that passed two landings and so came out into that hall wrought out of the living rock. At one end, it opened on the hollow beyond the house of Coffee. At the other end, it opened on the gorge across which stood the establishment of Bill Smith.

There were many unique devices in this chamber, but chief among them was the cooling arrangement.

On the hill-top above the trade winds blew without cessation day and night, through the year, and up there Matthew Coffee had erected two pairs of windmills. He did not need them for pumping water, since a fountain already broke out on the ground in the middle of the court, but he used the broad-vaned wheels to operate circular sets of fans which worked beneath in order to drive powerful currents of air into the "cooling-room." These currents passed through rock-hewn tunnels into which constant streams of water descended as spray—the left-over water that ran down from the fountain in the court above. Freshened and chilled in this manner, the drafts of air were diverted by ventilators in any direction desired, and the temperature of the room was controlled perfectly. There was no period so hot that the "cooling-room" of Matthew Coffee was found too warm. In various ways the water could be used; one was to have a rain of it descend, or even solid sheets, that poured past the big windows at either end of the hall, so that one had a sense of life inside a waterfall, and the light was exquisitely tempered in the same manner.

In no way had Matthew Coffee shown more intelligence than in his skill in making all of these machines work in silence. There was only, at all times, a thin, small whining that sounded like the noise of a rising storm. But that was a small price to pay for so much comfort.

Matthew Coffee saw that his guests had an excellent high tea. The Honorable Irvine Glastonbury, governor of the island, turned his nose a shade pinker with a pair of tall whiskeys, saying: "You understand things, Coffee. There's only one way to make a Scotch and soda. Fill the glass with ice, float the ice with whiskey, and put in enough soda to crown the glass. You understand those things because you have a brain, Matthew. Eh, Wilshire? You have a brain, too, Wilshire. You'd appreciate a clever fellow like Coffee. What do you say?"

Wilshire said nothing. He merely smiled, and glanced at his lieutenant. But Lieu-

tenant Clifford sat morosely in a corner, though Nancy Lee was doing her best to cheer him up. She had listened intently to the entire scheme of discoveries which Clifford had made and the heaps of evidence which he had accumulated against James Parry.

"There's no hope?" said Nancy. "It's certain that he's the man?"

"Why, Nancy, you've thought so from the first," said Clifford. "Except for you, I never would have dreamed of trailing him so closely!"

"I've thought so from the first," she admitted, "but still I had half a hope that I might be wrong. You know how it is. One can't help wishing that the thing might turn out better. I mean, he's such a big cut of man, it's hard to believe that he could be a cold-blooded murderer."

The lieutenant looked down at his own spindle-shanks.

"Size doesn't matter," he said. "It's the brain of the man that counts. But I'll manage to put James Parry in irons still! Yet there was the devil of it—that I should have laid the whole scheme before him. That I should have talked the whole thing out. I thought I would break him down with the weight of the evidence, but he kept his infernal, cool eye fixed on me, and was able to smile. Besides that, I was certain that I had enough in hand to justify holding him, at least. But Wilshire is a stickler for the form of the thing. He says that if there's so much as a whisper of real evidence against him, he'll put Parry in jail and keep him there until the case against him is complete. But he won't wait for the evidence. He'll be gone."

I THOUGHT that the chief from Kandava was expected this evening. The moment he states that he did *not* bring Parry to Tupia, won't that be enough to put Parry in jail?"

"It will," agreed the lieutenant. "But suppose the fellow manages to slip away in the meantime. I've got to have him watched. I've got to have him watched more carefully if it takes the entire con-

stabulary of Tupia to do the trick! I'm going to put three more men on the job this moment, as a matter of fact." And he jumped up to hurry out of the room.

It was almost at this moment that Matthew Coffee stood up and squared his heavy shoulders and turned his big head slowly as he surveyed the people in the room.

"I think everybody here has an interest in my firm," he said. "I'm going to ask your attention while I talk business for a moment.

They gave him their attention with a sudden silence. His voice was calm, but there was a strain of nervous tension about him.

He said, still turning his head a little and looking from one face to the next: "Coffee and Coffee is bankrupt!"

Then he waited. The governor made a snorting sound.

"Five—damn—thousand—guineas!" he said. Then he swallowed the last of his second drink.

Coffee turned about and said: "Nancy, this is a frightful blow to you."

"Is it?" said Nancy Lee. "I'm not even thinking about it."

She went up to Matthew Coffee and put a hand on his arm, and smiled on him, her eyes moving slowly and thoughtfully over his face.

"If anything went wrong, it was in spite of you," she said. "We know what Matthew Coffee is."

He put a hand over hers, without smiling, and glanced back at the others.

The governor said: "I know—splendid integrity, personal letter of recommendation any time—but how? I mean, how the devil, Matthew?"

He waved to the bigness of the room. It was large as the hall of a palace. Through the showering, artificial rain the light came trembling through and shone along the beautiful patterns in the matting, and ran glistening over the great display of native weapons along the wall.

"You had the brain to do all this, Matthew," muttered the governor.

"Copra's gone to the devil. Coffee and Coffee went with it," said Matthew Coffee, calmly.

"Yes, but don't be so damned noble and manly and all that, and quiet about it," said the governor. "Tell us how . . . and let me have another drink, Matthew, will you?"

Coffee waved to a servant who took the glass and filled it, watching the signal hand of the governor in the meantime.

Coffee was saying: "Every one of you is hurt. Badly hurt. I've given you an annual statement. It was always a good statement. The point was that there was always a big item. You remember what the biggest item always was?"

"Pearls on hand," said Nancy Lee.

"That's it," said Coffee. "Now they're not on hand."

"You are, though," said the governor, "and a fellow with a brain like yours. Start again—start in a rock and grow twenty feet in year—damned wonderful, what a brainy fellow can do."

Coffee faced the governor. "A man can't fail twice in the South Seas," he said.

"Stuff!" said the governor. "Brainy man like you. Everybody knows you were robbed. All trust you again, damn it. Absolutely all."

"Certainly, Coffee," said Hulbert Wilson, the first secretary.

But Coffee said: "I'm failing for twelve thousand pounds, after twenty years of hard work, out here. There's not enough soil for my kind of a plant. That's obvious. I'm going back to England and get to work. At the bottom of something. I don't want to be sentimental. But I have to say that my life is consecrated to the making of twelve thousand pounds as quickly as possible."

"Matthew, what was the value of the pearls in the safe?" asked the governor.

"I hate to name the figure," said Coffee. "I'd rather have my secretary do it. Gregory."

Big, red-faced Stephen Gregory, who had been making himself invisible in a shadowy corner, stepped out into the public eye.

He said: "There were pearls worth about forty-two thousand pounds, Coffee."

The people in the room made, all together, a sighing sound.

"Forty-two thousand—"

"I mean to say," said Hulbert Wilson, speaking slowly and clearly, "that to keep such a huge stock on hand was rather a risk, wasn't it?"

"I'm not going to justify myself," said Coffee. "I'll simply state that the market was in bad shape. I've been waiting nearly three years to find the proper moment for selling. It meant something like a ten or fifteen per cent loss to get rid of them now. To sell at forty thousand or at fifty thousand. That was the problem."

He clasped his hands behind his back and waited, smiling a little, his chin well up.

Hulbert Wilson said: "I'm not striking you down, Matthew. I'd back you with everything I have. I simply asked the question. You don't mind, do you?"

"Of course I don't mind," said Coffee. "I have to point out, furthermore, that there never has been a penny lost from my safe before the other day."

"Ellis!" exclaimed the governor. "That Ellis—damn him—"

"He doesn't count," said Matthew Coffee. "Who was the man that was *with* Ellis? That's more to the point. Who was the murderer that struck down the old lighthouse keeper? . . . Who burned the false light on the channel island? Who sent the Nancy Lee jumping down the devil's throat? The same man—or the same gang of men—looted the safe that Ellis had opened. And whoever it is, is still in Tupia, I suppose."

Matthew Coffee raised both hands in a brief gesture. "It seems rather a pity that we can't locate the thief," he said. "It means twelve thousand pounds to you, my good friends. It means to me thirty thousand pounds in addition—and my sacred honor!"

He said the last words in a rather stilted fashion, emotion seeming to force out the syllable in spite of himself.

Afterwards he said: "I shouldn't have put it that way . . . I think that's all we have to say to one another just now, though."

"There's one other thing," said Hulbert Wilson. "Wilshire and Clifford have been working hard on the thing. Is there any clue to follow, Wilshire?"

"We have plenty of clues," said the captain. "We know who committed the major crime. It's almost undoubted that he committed the second, also."

"Who?" cried the chorus.

"It's not law to spread a suspicion abroad until a man is found guilty," said Wilshire. "But I'm in need of help. From all of you. Unless we're careful, the man will spill through our hands and get away, loot and all. I'm going to appeal to every one of you to try to find out something, some vestige of criminal evidence on account of which we'll have an excuse to put in jail Mr. James Parry, that traveller from parts unknown! If we can jail him, I give you my word of honor that within two weeks we'll have enough evidence to hang him."

CHAPTER XXI.

STOLEN.

A CIRCLE of Lanuan men were doing a masked dance for the benefit of the guests of Bill Smith. They had a central spot of fire around which they pranced. Some oldsters sat back on their heels and beat drums or rattled bones.

The picture was good. The masks were sufficiently horrible. And the guests of Bill Smith were highly entertained. When you entertain a guest, he will buy more expensive drinks, and more of them. Bill Smith knew that, but he turned his own back on the entertainment and came sweating up the terrace to the private ground where the hammock of Perique was swung between two palms.

Perique lay in the hammock with his eyes closed.

"Hey—are you asleep?" whispered Bill.

"Not asleep. Thinking, Bill. Has the sun gone down?"

"Ten minutes ago. They got trouble lined up for you, Mr. Parry. Doubled my guards with constabulary men. More of them watching at the gate. An' the whisper goes around that they're watching James Parry. Watching as though they wanted his head."

"Bill, that's too bad. I intend to take a little walk, this evening. Do I have to put that off?"

"Yes. You have to put it off."

"I'll walk down and enjoy the dancing, then," said Perique.

He opened his eyes and sat up.

"No, I can see it well enough from here," he said.

"You take it dead easy," said Bill Smith. "You know what they're doing? They're hookin' you up, some way, with the sinking of the Nancy Lee. What about that? What you think about that, Mr. Parry?"

"They don't know me, Bill," said Perique. "They don't know what a big, soft heart James Parry has. Get me a bottle of that bacardi, will you?"

"I can't, Mr. Parry. I keep that stuff in my own cellar. I can't send a boy to fetch it, and it means a fifteen minute job for me."

"Go and get me a bottle of that bacardi," said Perique.

"All right," said Bill Smith. "Well, you got reason to want a drink, Mr. Parry. I hope you're gunna live to have a lot of 'em."

Bill Smith rolled his bulk slowly away. Perique, turning in the hammock, continued to watch the dancers, as they whirled and leaped. Then, half covering his mouth with his hand, he whistled a thin, birdlike note. He repeated it twice. It seemed to come from the upper air, it was so small and unhuman.

At the second repetition, one of the

dancers stepped back from the circle and sat down on his heels—something that all of them did from time to time. At the third whistle, the man faded from the firelight into the thicker darkness of the night and circled around the enclosure close to the high palisades.

Parry had gone back into his room, where he lighted a lamp, and the next moment there appeared at the doorway a huge, hideously masked figure. If the devil himself had appeared on the earth, he would have had to take to his heels at the sight of that tall form and that monstrous face.

"Enter, Kohala," said Perique.

He had thrown off his clothes, and he was rubbing a brown stain over his body, over his face, carefully rubbing it up to the lids of his eyes.

The Lanuan came slowly into the room, staring at the body of the white man.

"Ah hai!" said Kohala. "What teeth have chewed you, my father?"

"Little teeth that only broke the skin," said Perique.

"How did you know the call?" asked Kohala.

"I forget how. Konia told it to me, I think. Or Liho. Kohala, how is everyone in your house?"

"THEY live," said Kohala. He took off the monstrous mask and added:

"But Konia will not live long. Her heart is sick. *You* have made it sick. However, if you save the life of my son and then take away the life of my daughter, I still owe you much. Women are not a great value."

"Konia is not like the rest," said Perique.

"No," said Kohala. "She has moonlight in her eyes. There is a brightness in her face, I think."

"I am going to take that sickness away from her," said Perique. "But the people are watching me, Kohala. If I leave this place, I must go in such a way that the eyes of the white man won't follow me. Have you any more of those masks?"

"There are three extra ones out by the fire," said Kohala. "Shall I bring one?"

"Keep it for yourself," said Perique. "And give me that one you now have with you. Also, give me half of that skirt of yours."

It was a thick brush of split reeds, made after the fashion of some of the skirts that the women of the islands wore in the old days. Layer after layer, it was built up so that it made a dense forest of growth and with the leaping of the dancers made a rushing noise, like the wind.

Kohala stared at Perique for a moment. Then, without a word, he took off four of the upper layers. Perique bound them about his waist and put the mask over his head.

"We've made two men out of one," he said. "Go back to the dance, Kohala. Has anyone seen you come here?"

"No," said Kohala, "unless they had eyes that could see in the dark. But how did you know that I was one of the dancers? Who told you?"

"The glint of the big scar, there on your right leg—that was what told me," said Perique.

Kohala laughed.

"Will you go to Konia?" he asked.

"Yes," said Perique.

"She will make such a song that the whole of Lanua will hear it," said Kohala.

"Have you a small outrigger that I could sail tonight?" asked Perique. "I want to go out a bit."

"It is too small for such a wind," said Kohala. "There is too much wind even in the bay, and the storm is coming."

"Have you such a boat?" asked Perique.

Kohala, struck very sober, stared again at the white man.

"I shall go with you, then," he said.

"You'll stay here," said Perique. "Stay here with the dance. You know, Kohala, when a man goes on a narrow path he must go alone."

"And how far do you go?"

"As far as my luck lets me," said Perique. "Farewell, Kohala."

Kohala, backing out of the room, faded slowly into the darkness. Afterwards, Perique followed.

He drifted through the outer night towards the light of the little bonfire around which the dancers were now prancing wearily. The drummers vainly tried to freshen the music, for the Lanuans were spent by their work.

Perique sat down on his heels, watching the big, gleaming bodies for a moment. Then he rose and went on towards the gate of the place. He moved slowly. The heat of the night set him gleaming with perspiration. His lips parted with a noisy panting. And as he came to the brilliant light of the gateway, the two armed men who waited there gave back a little.

Perique walked slowly on down the street. He shifted the rustling skirt a little. It was binding him hard about the loins, because under its layers he had bound next to his skin a pair of white trousers and a linen shirt. There was hardly room for so much extra padding.

Bill Smith, returning with the bottle of bacardi, came up on the terrace singing, when he discovered that the hammock was empty.

"Hey, Mr. Parry!" he called.

He went to the door of the room. "Hey, Parry—" he began.

Then he saw the emptiness and was struck silent.

"Stole!" he breathed. "They've stole him!"

CHAPTER XXII.

KONIA'S AID.

PERIQUE went on down to the native village at the bottom of the hill. He walked through the points and slashes of lamplight, and the dull, red flicker of firelight, but on the whole there was little illumination to see features by. The sharpest eyes in Lanua could not have told him from a native.

Overhead, the stars trembled and now and then they went out as clouds flew across the sky. A storm was coming up, as had been said by Kohala. Among the waves that beat on the beach, an occasional

one struck with alarming force and spoke with a loud, booming voice, an alarm signal.

A wave of children came dashing down the "street" through which Perique was passing. The yelping of dogs raced along with the noise of the youngsters. Perique stood still, his eyes half-closed, and let that wave of noisy life rush past him as a surf-bather might have stood for the wash of a breaker.

Then he laughed and went on to the house of Kohala. At the entrance, he paused, and heard the voice of young Liho singing.

Perique pushed the hanging away from the door and glanced in. Konia lay face down, her head obscured by the dark, flat pool of her hair, widely spreading. A little red and green rooster, as though mistaking the firelight for the sun, had roused himself from his roost and was picking at the matting not far from the girl. Liho, his face held between his hands, regarded his sister with a sullen despair.

Perique, lifting his head, found in his mind the proper thing to do. You can find songs of all sorts among the Lanuans, but the old love songs are the most numerous, and he began to sing, not loudly, but with that gong-like resonance breaking into his voice in spite of himself.

Konia, when she heard the first words, started to her knees, sweeping back her hair with both hands, and in the middle of that gesture she remained frozen to brown stone, staring at the tall figure in the doorway. Liho, when he had a first glance at the intruder, picked up a fishing spear with a long, dangerously barbed head. He held that spear poised for the cast, frowning angrily; but Perique leaned at the doorway and sang the song through to the end.

"Perique!" said Kohala, and jumped to her feet.

He came striding in, the leafy skirt jouncing around his knees.

"Perique!" said Liho, and tossed the spear aside.

"Do you come for my father, lord?" said Konia, trembling.

"No, but I'm wearing part of his

clothes," said Perique, taking off the hideous mask from his head.

"Do you come for Liho, lord?" said the girl.

PERIQUE laughed, and for an answer he sang that song which, in the old days, was reserved for the lips of Lanuan princes and heroes only. It goes:

*I have been very far away from you.
The high green mountains of twilight lay
between us.
The terrible dark ocean of night lay between
us.
I journeyed on through the storm, hopeless,
And suddenly I reached the white beach of
the dawn,
I saw my home and the bright morning of
your face.*

Konia, listening, was trying to put back her hair in order, but her hands stopped against her will and forgot what they were doing. As he ended, Liho said: "I told you he would come for you or send for you, Konia."

"Say it, lord," said the girl.

"I've said enough. Singing is better than saying," said Perique. "Liho, I'm going for a sail. Will you show me your father's outrigger?"

"You would not sail outside the bay on such a night?" asked Liho.

Perique raised his head and listened, for the wind screamed suddenly at them and the roof of the house shivered.

"You must not sail even on the bay in such weather," said Liho. "But sit down with us, lord, and eat."

Before Perique could answer, the girl had said: "Liho, when a man speaks, a boy should be silent. Go lead the way to the boat."

"Ah hai, Konia," said Liho, "now that he almost has said that he loves you, do you want the sea to eat him, bones and all?"

"The sea takes what the gods give it," said the girl. "Shall I show you the boat, lord?"

"Look at her!" said Liho, wondering. "Only five minutes ago she looked as pale and dead as the belly of a shark. And now

it's as though the sun had been burning her all day long. How can you change so soon, Konia?"

"My lord knows," said Konia. "Shall we go?"

They left the house. The wind struck them, putting a heavy shoulder against their bodies, so that Liho staggered a little, but then laughed and went running ahead of them very happily.

When they got out on the beach, there were no stars to be seen on Tupia Bay. The waves came rapidly in shore, slapping the beach in an excited hurry. Thin drivings and gusts of spray stung the face and made the lips salty at once.

"Ah hai!" cried Liho. "Who would even want to go out on the bay in this sort of a night? It is dark! It is too dark! But not too dark for death to smell a man, like a shark. Lord, stay warm and safe with us on shore."

The girl waited for a moment, her face lifted towards Perique as she stared at him. Then she said: "His mind is fixed. When the mind of a man is fixed, the women and children should be silent, Liho. Here, lord, is the boat."

THEY ran it down the sand into the water. Liho lifted the log of the outrigger so that it would not cut into the beach and make the work harder. Perique and the girl handled the canoe. It was richly done with pearl about the sharp ends; there were still enough stars to make the ornaments glimmer dimly.

Now the craft slipped into the water. The rapid waves began to knock the head of it around.

Liho and the girl stood shoulder deep, steadying the outrigger.

"Ready!" called Perique.

He was hoisting the sail of heavy matting.

A voice called close to him: "I can tend the sail, lord. Let me come with you!"

"You are only a girl, Konia," he said.

"Even to die, lord, it is better to have company," she answered.

He, for reply, reached down a big hand,

caught hers, and agile as a flying fish she slipped aboard.

"Hai! Hai! Let me come too!" shouted Liho.

But the wind now filled the sail and made the light little outrigger leap over the waves like a galloping horse. The arms of Liho gesticulated in the darkness for a moment; his voice screamed after them like a sea-bird's. And then he was gone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LITTLE SEA-BIRD.

THERE were a pair of paddles under the cleats at the bottom of the craft.

Perique used one of these for the steering, and Konia held the sheet, paying out or hauling in with the most expert craft, and so managing the matter that she often had the narrow log of the outrigger quite clear of the water, merely kissing the crests of the waves. When she managed this, the boat leaped with a new life. It seemed to outrun the quartering wind that drove it. And the impacts of the waves blurred rapidly together until it seemed that they were being exploded upwards into the air by the number of those shocks.

So they leaped like a great, sleek fish across Tupia Bay and headed for the harbor channel. The land on either side of the narrow outlet began to run dark with speed through either corner of the eye of Perique. The wind was nearly aft, now, and the outrigger wallowed a little with the clumsy force of it, since all boats that sail, if they have manhood in them, love best a wind quartering, or abeam.

They slid out past the black sharknose of the island; they had before them the yellow gleam of the light on Nihoni Point, its rays scattered obscurely across the waters, here and there, wherever the light could find a spot of smoothness in which to be reflected.

Perique held on towards the light until he was clear, or almost clear, of the headland on his right. Then he shouted to Konia, and steered towards the north into

the open sea. He could see the sudden turning of her head, and a faint gleam of light that seemed to issue from the sea showed a glint along her throat and arm. But afterwards she pulled the sheet in until the mast groaned with the leaning weight of wind that filled the sail. Once more she had the outrigger log lifting from the waves. Once more they were skimming like a bird.

A savage wonder touched Perique. What other Lanuan, among the most daring of the sailors there, would have dared to venture out to the open sea in such a wind, among such waves?

Here they had cleared the shelter of the land, and the great ground swells of the Pacific, built up by five thousand miles of powerful trade winds, began to hump their backs under the little boat.

It was like climbing hills. In the trough, the wind failed them, the sail went slack, joggling aimlessly on the mast. And then as the shoulder of the next wave tossed them up, lightly, staggering into the wind, the sheet had to be played and steadied with the most expert hand, the steering paddle had to work desperately in the sway of water made hard with speed, so that the nose of the canoe might point true and the gale used like a friend.

The power of that wind, if it caught them wrong, would smash them down into the waves like a fierce hand.

The sword of the gale struck whistling past them. They had to use the edge of it—the tooth of it, as the old Lanuan song has it.

AT that moment a yellow fire bloomed in the east, ran over the wilderness of the sea towards them. That was the rising moon, puffed larger by three times than her true size, now a shining ball flung up from the horizon, with the lift and spring of the waves darkening her face.

The skirts of a storm poured shadows across that moon and turned her face grey. But once more she was looking vaguely through the squall as it sprang on the little boat.

"Into it! Into it!" called Perique.

"Ay, into it!" cried the girl. "Split the wind like an axe. Split it down the smooth grain and we'll come through safely!"

He, with immense paddle strokes that set his shoulder cords straining and creaking like a mechanism of ropes and iron, swung the head of the canoe about; and as the dark feet of the storm ran upon them, the girl trimmed the sail in flat, so that it cut the wind like a knife.

On a powerful ship the thing can be done. What is the old rule? Never take in sail for a squall you can see through. Knife the sails with flat, straight edges through the gale and wait for the fury of the wind to die before you try to use it again.

In a big ship that can be done by a skillful helmsman and a swift crew; but the little outrigger with its sail of matting was like a toy made of paper. Only the sheer edge must be presented to the storm. If it veered the slightest bit from the hurricane, it would be struck flat, capsized, and then in a moment two lives would be cast into the waters, two human heads would be struck by the lurch and the beat of the combers until they went down for the last time.

Two lives like two grains of salt, they would be dissolved.

But as the wave heaved them up, they cut the wind truly, steadily. Then a black-backed monster of a wave swelled up and gave them a lee—a lee of danger, for they must feel their way up the rise and crazy crest-swing of the next roller and straight on into the wind again.

So the girl, glancing back, saw the moonlight gilding faintly the long, wind-streaked hollow flank of the wave.

And the water sucked into deep, sudden mouths of black about the laboring paddle of Perique.

The next moment she was working at the sheet with cunning hands as they came over the bulging forehead of the wave. The edge of the wind slid under the upward driving prow. It lifted, staggered the whole of the little craft—and then the paddle

bent in the hands of Perique as the rapid strokes swung the head of the boat right into the wind. The sheet played in the wise hands of the girl. God praise the seamanship that was born into the generations of her blood!

Yet they were not through. The wind put down its hand flailings upon them. They wallowed deep. Spray seared their eyes and burned their faces; spray in choking blasts. The edges of the gunwales staggered down under the lip of the wave. Leaden heavy water poured in on them. And then the trough of the wave descended with them.

They were shooting downhill into the slack of the wind. They would shoot straight on, perhaps, into the heart of the next roller, and so to quick destruction.

THE moon would see them. That was all. And back there in Tupia was the smell of roasted breadfruit, the humming voice of the far off song, the babble of playing children among the thatched houses, now being silvered by this same moon.

Konia, as they slid down out of the wind, dropped the sheet, turned with a flat of cloth in her hands, and began to bail with all her might. Perique could not help her. His skill would be in guiding the canoe down the cataract of water, so aiming it that the nose might come a little askance on the opposite bill of the wave, and so perhaps glance up it. If only the bailing could lighten the depth of the canoe a little! Only a little, there towards the head!

He could see her clearly enough through the beat of the rain that had the moon behind it. The squall had grown shallower and shallower. It had almost blown over. The light of the moon was being strained through the skirts of the downpour to show Perique the frantic work of the girl. But fear had not distorted her face; she fought with the honest enthusiasm of one who does not doubt a victory!

And now they were on it—the last down-

ward lurching run into the trough, aimed like a spearcast at the opposite wall of water.

He swerved the bows. They struck—they were buried in the sea.

No, they had indeed glanced. They were lifting. The water streamed away. The wave flung them up, up—into the unclouded light of the moon, and the squall rushed on past them with a roar and a screaming.

Konia, again at the sheet, paid it out slowly. The wind, no longer a terrible sword-stroke, was again their dangerous and gigantic servant to whisk them over the ocean.

"Down there to the leeward! The leeward! Do you see, Konia?" shouted Perique.

She pointed an arm that glittered with water and moonlight. She, also, had seen the sweep of the shadow across the face of the moon, like the flick of a bat's wings before a light. Some other boat, more powerful, was daring the way across the stormy ocean, making desperately for the shelter of Tupia Bay.

"We run for that!" called Perique. "The devil's in my spinal marrow. I can feel him gritting his teeth on my bones. This is my night for luck, Konia! Away for them!"

So swerving a little, with the wind quartering once more, they took the gale on the opposite side and began to sweep down towards that other craft.

It carried a light fore and aft. They could see it again and again, in flashes and broader glimpses, a monstrous, low-hung sail and beyond a powerful hull the lifting, the thrash and the plunge of the outrigger; taking punishment that would break iron, so it seemed.

For that goal they ran the canoe until the huge thamakau was right in their lee and dark figures of men stood up along the side of it, clinging to the rigging as they stared at this little sea-bird which was winging its way towards them, this stormy petrel skimming the waves.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Instead of Guns

By WALTER CLARE MARTIN



The lion was upon Capp like fury

*It takes a brave man to face
a charging lion with only
bow and arrow—and if the
bow breaks—*

WHEN I first visited Africa, buying museum tableaux, I stopped off at a gun store in London. While I was fondling one of those perfect British fowling pieces which make the usual American shotgun sound like a Model T Ford jumping boulders, I happened to mention my mission.

Soon the manager came down to see me.

"By all means," he said, "when you get to Nairobi, inquire for Sir Bardolf Beamish. He is the greatest hunter in Africa."

I had heard of Sir B., I admitted.

"Of course, of course," he enthused. "Sir Bardolf is known the world 'round. We sold him twelve rifles last year."

I bought my bird gun and went out.

On the boat, going over, the captain said: "Be sure to look up Sir Bardolf, as soon as you get to Nairobi. He's the best big game hunter in Africa."

At Mombasa, port door of East African rail, they told me to see Sir Bardolf. Idle whites, sweating blacks and storekeeping Hindus assured me he was the mightiest nimrod known between Cape Town and Cairo.

I was eager with anticipation of the specimens I expected to buy from Sir Bardolf. In sheer truth, I hardly thought to look past him.

At Nairobi I called first on Lord Nay-smith, curator of the local museum. He

asked me if I had met Sir Bardolf. I had not, so he kindly arranged it.

Sir Bardolf, tall, stalwart, nourished, had Jove's Ajax writ plain on his forehead. He was not one to rate himself too humbly. His voice was bass deep, quite impressive. At a word from Lord Naysmith, Sir Bardolf promptly agreed to show me through his stuffed story of conquest.

It filled a huge wing flung out from his house in the British suburbs of Nairobi.

The exhibit, in point of numbers of beasts, was a tropical Noah's Ark. When Sir B. hunted, he hunted in style. He seldom went on safari with less than two hundred black porters and six gun-bearers from his Indian household. He had special permits from every mandate in Africa. The tinkle of *baksheesh* set men fighting to join him, for Sir B. had inherited pounds.

For twenty years Sir Bardolf, now forty-five, had safaried forth, bent on slaughter. He had slain a round hundred of lions. I saw two gorillas, six rhinos, seven elephants, ten crimsoned flamingoes; gangs of leopards, topis, kongonis, gnus, zebras; biting-badgers, jumping-impallas, spraddle-legged giraffes, round-eyed baboon people, and smaller birds, beasts and snakes without mercy.

This triumphal collection was herded into the wing like a stampede gazed at by a Gorgon. Like Tamerlane and his tower of skulls, Sir B. revelled in numbers slain. Art troubled him little and science less, when new exhibits piled in upon old ones.

At the toes of a Congo gorilla haunched a rock-rabbit from the lake plains. Lions silently growled at okapis. A gemsbuck from the parched Kalahari browsed beneath a camphor-tree branch wrenched from the gloomy east slopes of high Kenya.

SIR BARDOLF explained and recited. I listened and made mental notes. I marked out a dozen fine specimens for a tableau of the Athi plains. When I had seen the whole show, and the hour appeared ripe, I inquired of Sir B. his price.

To my utter chagrin he refused me. He would not put a price on a thing. Of the

hundreds of creatures that made up his stuffed cosmos, he would not sell me so much as a titmouse.

I argued, reasoned, persuaded, appealed to his public sense. My tableaux, remounted in the American museum, would delight thousands of visitors annually. Moreover, he could sell or donate several groups and actually improve his collection.

Sir Bardolf said, positively no. He was building a pavilion to house his dead horde at his estate near somewhere in England. When he married (I had heard he expected to be), very likely his line would continue. To his eldest son he desired to pass on the saga of his prowess, intact.

I bade him good-day with the best grace I could muster; and quit Nairobi early next morning.

IT was two years before I again set foot in Kenya Colony, this time seeking storks and flamingoes. I stopped off at Nairobi to look up Jerry Cass, who had bummed with me many a furlong. Jerry bought and sold crocodile luggage. He had set up in Nairobi, a few months before, and had notified me of the fact through a post card.

I found Jerry on the field of the local archery club, plunking shafts into one of the targets. The field was a fine lawn near Sir Bardolf's house and belonged, so I learned, to that Jamshid. Sir Bardolf had donated the field to the club; of which he was the most touted member.

Jerry greeted me with his regular red-headed warmth, and insisted that I shoot with him. We walked to the ascham in the shade of a great Kenya cedar, where Jerry rigged me up with a guest bow. We got arrows, glove, bracer, ground quiver, wool wipe and returned to the hundred yard line.

We shot the first end and sauntered down towards the gold. Jerry said:

"You stopped off for the auction?"

I answered him: "Believe it or not; I stopped off to see you. What auction?"

"Sir Bardolf Beamish's auction. He's selling his museum tonight."

"Don't try to kid me," I told him.

"I'm not kidding you," Jerry said.

"Sure you are," I said. "I ought to know something about it. Sir B. wouldn't sell you a moth-eaten baboon if you offered him half of Nairobi. He says he is keeping them all for his heir, to be born some fine morning in England."

"None the less," said Jerry, "he has packed up and gone, and his solicitor is handling the auction."

"Well, I'll be damned!" I said.

WHILE we shot and walked and tugged our shafts from the rye, Jerry told me what he knew of it:

When I got here—said Jerry—the whole town was hog wild. Sir B. had returned from safari. He had taken more blacks and brought back more game than was even seen outside a big circus. Three taxidermists had bundled right along with Sir B. to look after the beasts as he smacked them.

It was great, so Sir B. threw a party. He invited everybody of standing. I wasn't of standing, but he had to give me a bid because I was a friend of the girl he was gone on.

This girl, Mary Dees, was doing research, with a professor named Smith, from Johns Hopkins. Her business was measuring skulls. She certainly measured Sir Bardolf's skull and carried it around in her hand. Sir B. was so infernally infatuated with her he split with his fiancée.

You wouldn't wonder at that, knowing Mary Dees. She topped the cream here in Nairobi. There was no "ayther" and "nayther" about her. She was spirited, keen, but she kept her voice down. You get what I mean—a real lady.

Well, Sir B. fell for Mary; and a lot of others fell, too; but she seemed to favor him most. She liked to hear him talk of his travels. He tried to impress her with his wealth and ancestry; but she didn't give a hoot for all that. The time and money he spent fighting tsetse fly plagues did a lot to make her respect him.

As I said, I went to the animal show be-

cause I was Mary Dees' friend. It sure was a swell affair. The hall was jungled with tubs of gorgeous plants which Sir B. had collected en route. The smell of it made a man dizzy. Punch was served by Masai girls in native garb from hardwood bowls on the backs of stuffed rhinos.

Sir Bardolf, of course, was tremendous. He escorted the party about. He lectured on all the big thrills. There was one lion, with a mane that would hide a fat fox, who had ripped up a couple of spearmen. The blacks had plunged into a donga to scare out the brute, so Sir B. could have a go at it.

The lion came out of the donga. Sir B. knocked it cold with one slug. As he pictured the scene, the ladies around him—and men, too—buzzed and applauded. How wonderful, Sir Bardolf! What a marvelous shot! What nerve you must have! And so on and on. You know how.

Not Mary Dees, though. She looked troubled. When the wife of Lord Nay-smith turned to Mary and said: "Did you ever hear of a man with more courage?" Mary blurted right out: "Yes, I have. The two blacks who walked into the donga."

Well, the remark got around to Sir B. soon enough; and it stung him where he could feel it. He forced up a laugh and passed it off with a quip; but it gripped him bad, coming from Mary.

You see, above all, B. plumed himself on his nerve in the face of danger. Why not? He had a world rep.

ALONG about three the mob began drifting outside, where tea was being served on the lawn. Sir Bardolf returned to the museum. He sidled over to Mary Dees, who was gazing at a fine lion head. He wanted to hear her deny that she meant anything by that slap, so he said in a light spoofing manner:

"So, so, Miss Ethnologist, I hear you called me a coward."

"You heard more than I said," Mary told him.

This wasn't exactly what Sir B. had

hoped for, and his British face turned a shade redder. He could not, of course, drop the subject. For the sake of his pride he had to know where he stood. Men in love can't be patient, you know.

Sir B. seized the lion head by a tuft and gave it a masterful shake.

"I don't think this old fellow would call me a coward," he said. "I conquered him in a fair fight."

"It wasn't a fair fight," said Mary.

"He was charging me," B. said, "straight out of a copse. Not more than seventy yards. If I had missed . . ."

"You wouldn't miss," said Mary.

"A chap with weak nerves might miss."

"And for that reason," said Mary, "a chap with weak nerves shows more courage when he faces a dangerous beast."

"So you think I'm a coward!" Sir Bardolf's jaw clicked. I could see he was plenty disgruntled.

"I don't say that," said Mary. "I don't know; and I doubt if you do. I merely say it doesn't take courage for an expert shot to blast game with a high-powered rifle. You once told me you used a Rigby Express because it was the best gun you could buy. You drop most of your game while they're still looking at you. Some of it running away. Occasionally a lion charges. You choose your moment and fire. If you miss, you shoot again, and drop him. If you miss again and again, you have gun-bearers behind you who can come to your aid in a crisis. Besides gun-bearers you have native spearmen, brave fellows, trained lion hunters. So it's a matter of hunting technique. To me all this slaughter, all these handsome beasts robbed of life, merely prove you can shoot. Nothing else."

Mary hadn't lifted her voice a note; but it must have roared in his ears like thunder. Nobody, at least in his hearing, ever had put it like that. For a second or so I expected an outburst; but Sir B. choked it down like a gentleman. Mary suggested they have a sandwich outside, so they strolled to the lawn, where I joined them.

I had heard the whole thing, so I felt it my duty to try to make them forget. The air cleared quite a bit, and I was about to drift off when an Indian boy brought me a message.

TWO Americans were at the gate, he told me. I went to the gate and found Big Riggs and Capp Farr, both archers and old pals of mine. They had come to Africa to shoot lions with bows, like Pope and Young—God rest them.

Capp and Big apologized for trailing me to the party; but they were leaving Nairobi tomorrow.

I was tickled to death to see them. I made them come in, and squired them around. They almost stole the show from Sir B. The British have a noble traditional love for the longbow, even though we have beat all their records.

The ladies oh'd and ah'd over Capp and Big, and somebody proposed that they shoot. The idea went over like punch. Capp and Big got their tackle; then the whole bevy of guests fluttered out to this archery field. More than half the spectators were women.

Capp and Big wouldn't shoot unless someone else shot, so Sir Bardolf and I got out bows. Six men and two ladies joined us. Then the boys—Capp and Big—unstrapped their gear and pulled their hunting bows from their sheaths.

Cap's bow was of lemonwood, a beautiful thing; but no such bow as his favorite snakewood. The snakewood had been damaged in transit. Big's bow was of steel, small and jointed. None of us in Nairobi had seen a steel bow, so naturally asked plenty of questions.

"It really isn't a bow," said Capp. "It's a kind of jumping-jack toy. You aim at your wife and kill your grandmother. It's got a steel string and sounds like a bass drum. Big hopes the noise will scare off the lions."

Big spread out his grin and took it. He was six inches taller than Capp.

"Well, Cappy," he said, "I can't shoot like you, and I don't savvy much about

lions. But if half what I've heard of 'em is true, I sure want a bow that won't break."

We all laughed and went out to shoot for an hour. Sir Bardolf, of course, beat the field. He really is a remarkable archer. Capp and Big are crack shots, but not used to shooting by form. Besides their bows were too powerful for target. Big's new lemonwood cost him three or four golds, or bull's eyes, by sending shafts clean through the target.

The guests, I felt, were a trifle unsold by the showing the Americans made. They expected some sort of miracle. Being good sports, they concealed any feeling like that and treated Capp and Big royally.

And Mary Dees—I forgot—Mary Dees all the time was fairly afire with excitement. The idea of these Americans facing lions with arrows thrilled her to the very core.

All of a sudden she turned to Sir Bardolf and cried out: "What a game! Why don't you go with them?"

Sir B. was knocked off the Christmas tree.

"Me?" he said.

"You," said Mary. "You'll get a thrill such as you've never had in all your years of gunning."

That brought up Sir B. like the crack of a whip. I could imagine what he was thinking.

"Why, yes," he said. "Yes, of course, I'll go if the Americans have no objection. Yes, of course, it ought to be jolly."

JOLLY was the right word, believe me. To make it more jolly some of the guests of Sir B. demanded the pleasure of going. Capp and Big didn't cheer the idea. They said lions and women were too fearful a risk; so a compromise was set up.

Every spectator agreed to stop dead in his tracks, as soon as the guide gave the signal. They agreed, also, to keep their mouths shut.

That's the way it stood until morning. Then another controversy arose. Capp and Big had no guns, and proposed to take none; not even an emergency side-arm.

Sir Bardolf and other experienced men declared they were lunatics.

"That's not courage, my friend," Sir Bardolf said to Capp. "It's a downright insult to sense. An arrow can kill a lion—sometimes—but it never has stopped a charge. Even the late Arthur Young confessed that."

Little Capp looked up at Sir B.'s six-foot hulk, and squinted his quizzical squint.

"Listen, pódner," he said, "—about that courage crack. Big and I are not out hunting courage. We're hunting lions—with arrows. If we tote guns along the temptation will be to rely on them in a pinch."

"The pinch will be tighter than you think," said Sir B., and he walked away, looking disgusted.

That argument occurred at the packing. We got under way about noon. We had a couple of luggage trucks and a string of personal cars. The road was good and the scenery great, so we camped that night in high spirits. After supper we spun a few lion yarns, then went to our individual tents. Most of the outfit was asleep before ten.

I'm not a first class pillow man, so I decided to gawk at the stars. I got my pipe and settled down on a rock and fell to mooning about Big and Capp.

After a spell I discovered Sir B. was up, too, pacing about the encampment. He saw my light and strolled over. He said it was a beautiful night. I agreed I'd never seen better. Then he said:

"Your friend—the—er—Mr. Riggs must have had some bad luck with bows breaking. That steel weapon is quite the idea."

"I don't like them," I said. "They're erratic."

"Still, it's a point," said Sir B. "Not important, perhaps, but a point. Now for me, I shoot indifferently well, but I never studied bow-woods as wood. We English, you know, have a tradition of yew. We forget there are other good bow-woods. Now, if you were in my place, would you risk a yew bow on lions, or would you choose a much tougher wood—say bois

d'arc—with whose feel you were less familiar?"

I told him I would stick to the bow I shot best. He agreed no doubt that was wisest. No matter. Well, it was a beautiful night. He was on his way to look after the porters.

NEXT morning we quit the good packed road and made for the lion country. It was high in the Masai reservation. We used the better part of a week to get there; but everybody had a glorious time. There were side hunts for partridge and bustard. I scored top and felt pretty swell. Sir Bardolf was happy and showered coins on the blacks, for Mary was friendly toward him.

About noontime we overtook an armed band of Masai with their hair done in hanks, like small horse-tails. This proved they were lion hunters. Each man had a turtle-shaped shield of bullshide and a spear with a monstrous iron blade.

Sir B. at once talked to these warriors and learned they were after a cat. The brute had killed one of their women. A scout had located his lair. Sir B. made a deal which delighted all hands, whereby they were to lead us to the lion.

We followed the blacks through a plain full of antbush until we arrived at a rock-sided valley. The valley had grass and pretty liberal cover. A donga cut slantwise across it. This donga was filled with reeds and grass and fringed with occasional thickets.

Here, the warriors said, we should find him. We halted our train and piled out. The porters were left with the cars to make camp, which they were mightily tickled to do.

Sir Bardolf then chinned with the warriors and worked out a plan of campaign.

The Masai were to steal down the rocky sides of the vale to get on the far side of the donga. This would block off the lion's escape. Our three archers were to move towards the lair. The rest of us were to follow at fifty yards; but were sworn to stop short at a signal.

As I recall, there were seventeen of us; perhaps nine men and eight women. Each one of us was thoroughly armed. But Capp had made us all swear, on our solemn honor, to shoot only in self-defense.

In other words, no matter what terrible turn events took, we were not to assist the three archers.

The archers hauled out their equipment. Capp looped up his 60-pound lemonwood bow and Big his 80-pound steel. Sir B. looked at it and seemed about to say something; then bent to his own tackle box.

First he strung a yew bow and strapped on his quiver. He appeared about ready to go. Again he glanced at Big's steel weapon. He put down his yew bow to string up a flat bois d'arc; but the feel of it was too awkward. He decided to use the long yew.

When Sir B. got his broadheads perched just right on his back, he started to belt on his pistol. He looked up and saw Mary's eyes on him. She said nothing, but her eyes took in Capp and Big, who were carrying not even a knife. Sir B. exclaimed, "Jove! I almost forgot. We're going native today. This thing's such a habit with me." He tossed the gun into the box.

No one spoke, and the whole party crept forward. The archers drew away from the rest of us slowly; getting fifty yards, maybe sixty, ahead.

AQUEER prickle began to work up the back of my neck. I never had stalked lion before. The archers were less than a hundred yards from the lair. A hundred yards to a lion is nothing at all, for he comes like a greased thunderbolt. I was itching to yell to the boys to halt, when Sir Bardolf lifted his hand.

Capp and Big stopped short. We all stopped. The Masai began to march towards the donga. They thumped their spearheads against their shields, just loudly enough to unsettle the lion. The idea was to provoke him to pop out on our side, which looked to be the much weaker battalion. I began to pray that he wouldn't.

A Masai warrior let loose a shrill signal

cry, waving his spear at the thickets. He had seen the brush stir, the beast slinking. Sir B. raised his longbow, ready to shoot; but Capp and Big waited, watching.

The beast thrust his head from the thicket and glared at us, blinking the sun. We had spoiled his sleep, making him peevish. Cappy swung up his bow to try a long shot.

"Don't do that!" Sir Bardolf warned him. "If you wound him, he'll charge like hell. Wait a moment—we'll get a flank shot."

Little Capp did not hear him; or didn't care. He drew in a flash and let fly. The shaft sailed through the sun like a steel-beaked hawk and darted upon the lion. It took a slice of skin from his nose, but glanced away into the donga.

Say, did you ever see a mad lion? It's the most terrifying sight in the world. That fellow's hair and his mane and his whiskers stood out as if his whole face had exploded. He shook a trickle of blood from his nose and came at us coughing blue murder.

You can bet we were pretty well paralyzed as that terrific beast tore down on the archers. Mary Dees ran ahead with her gun. She stopped, though, halfway between us and them, suddenly recalling her promise. Being made as she was, she could understand that her aid would be unfor-givable.

Now the lion, I said, was charging, making thirty feet at a bound. Capp whipped out another broadhead. He and Big cut loose at the same time. One of them struck the lion—I couldn't say which—in his right hind leg at the joint.

The lion was thrown off his balance. He rolled and roared, fighting the shaft. This gave Sir B. the two seconds he needed. He aimed as at a target, and loosed. His shaft soared over the floundering beast. He had figured his angle too high.

Sir Bardolf grabbed at his shoulder and jerked out three or four arrows. He dropped all but one, which he loaded. The lion was on his feet, snarling. Sir Bardolf

and Capp and Big in a row threw up their bow-arms for a draw.

Then I heard the most sickening sound of my life—the sound of wood-fiber crack-ing. Sir B. froze stiff with his bow at half draw. He did not take time to inspect it.

SIR B. wheeled and called to us: "Hand me a gun!" Then he realized we were not his gun-bearers. Mary Dees was close to him—not thirty yards. He ran to her; asked for her rifle.

"I've broken my bow—quick, Mary!" he said.

Mary Dees went white; but she clung to her gun. She was staring beyond Sir Bardolf.

"It wasn't your bow, Sir Bardolf," she said. He snatched up his yew, at his feet. Then he saw what all of us had our eyes glued upon: the lion was charging Cappy.

It was Cappy's bow that had split up the back. He had it clutched in both hands, like a spear. In the incredibly brief instant occupied by the charge he appeared to brace himself for the onset.

The lion was upon him like fury; roaring past Big, who let fly a broadside. Cappy lunged with his damaged bow pole. The point met the lion smack in the face and snapped, of course, like a toothpick. The lion knocked Capp twenty feet. He gave a huge bound to finish him off; then collapsed at Capp's feet with a snarl.

Big's arrow had split the beast through the heart. Capp suffered a few ribs busted. All the whites hurried up to lend a hand—all but Mary Dees and Sir Bardolf. They just stood and stared at each other. Then I saw her turn her face away.

"Poor wood—no matter what kind—always breaks," I heard her murmur.

Sir B. began giving loud orders. We packed up quickly and moved.

When we reached Nairobi Sir B. let the news round that he had been suddenly called to England. Then his lawyer arrived and announced in the press that Sir B's collection of trophies would be put up for auction.

THE END

Killer's Joke

By HAPSBURG LIEBE

For nine years Hite Gregg planned this vengeful murder—to be accompanied by a cruel joke which only mountaineers could understand

HE was a big man, hawk-eyed, with a hard, straight line for a mouth, and he wore clothing that was very good. Mercilessly he drove the weary horse beneath him along the stony mountain trail. The sun was down when he reached the thickly-wooded valley that lay between Ripshin Bald and Smoky Thunder. Soon an ancient log cabin loomed up ahead, and in the doorway a little and lone, scraggly-bearded old man stood watching.

"Howdy," he said as the horse stopped within two rods of him.

The newcomer did not return the greeting. He dismounted and tossed the rein over a gateless gatepost. "Got anything to eat?"

"Nary a bite," said the oldster. "I air mighty pore, and they air times when I haf to go withouten a meal. Like now."

He backed into the single small room as the other advanced. Each dropped into a crude chair. The younger man—in his early thirties, he was—studied his host through slitted eyelids. The host squirmed uneasily as he noted the butt of a revolver under the newcomer's coat.

"I—I air Jim Lippert," he stammered. "Folks calls me 'Old Fuzzy.'"

"Old Fuzzy; eh?" absent-mindedly. The hawk eyes were boring. "Do you know anybody named Gregg hereabouts?"

Lippert blinked. "I did, yeuh. Knowed 'em all. Plum' daredevils, the men of 'em war. Every one of 'em had kilt somebody, and didn't do hit in any ord'nary way,



"Hello, Sheriff! You're jest in time"

nuther. Fer instance, Sam Gregg plugged Ab Davy's gun up with lead, and let Ab blow his own head off when he shot at a squirrel. And Stringer Gregg put rock salt in with the buckshot when he cut down on Jaydee Mullins, so's it would hurt wuss, and 'en told him jokes whilst he died. Sam and Stringer war both hung at Maysville. Ain't but one Gregg a-livin' now. His name air Hite. He—"

"And where is Hite?"

"Went to the penitency fer life, nine year ago," Lippert answered. "One man stuck the jury, or he'd 'a' been hung too. He—"

"About my build, wasn't he?" the visitor interrupted.

"No. Hite war tall and skinny, young beard and mustache; not broad like you, and not smooth-faced like you, and he talked mountain talk like me. Mebbe he wouldn't been ketched, wasn't fer a lumber-jack—woods boss now—named Hoss Creek Bill Elmore. Not Bays Mountain Bill Elmore. Hoss Creek Bill. Hite jumped him for his pay-day money, and Bill grabbed him and helt him fer the sheriff. They'd allus hated each other. And 'en, both of 'em had wanted Beezie Anson, purtiest gyurl anywhar. And so, when the sheriff tuck Hite off, Hite swore by his mammy's grave he'd come back some day and kill Hoss Creek Bill."

"Elmore marry the girl?"

Lippert nodded billygoat fashion. "Yeuh, they married. Live at the old Tom Elmore place on Bad Axe Creek, 'bouten a mile from here."

"Don't lie to me, old man. Are you any kin o' the Greggs?"

Promptly Lippert confessed: "Blood cousin, yeuh. Why?"

The other rose laughing a flinty laugh. "Well, I passed the test in fine shape. If my own kin didn't know me, other people won't. I'm Hite Gregg, Cousin Fuzzy. It took me nine years to think up a way to get out of prison so that I could come back here and kill Bill Elmore!"

The little old mountaineer was thunder-struck. But he needn't have been. Hite

Gregg wore no young beard and mustache now, and he wasn't sunburned, and he had taken on more than thirty pounds weight, and in prison he'd learned to speak fair English. This notwithstanding, he was still a killer Gregg.

"You're blood kin of mine," he went on, "and you can't do anything, or tell anything, against me."

The oldest law of the mountains, that was, and a law that may not be broken. Old Fuzzy Lippert nodded. He said then: "Whar'd you git them good clo'es at, Hite, and that gun you air a-totin', and the saddled hoss out thar?"

Hite's grin was as hard as his laughter of a minute or so before.

"Oh, I picked 'em up on the way back here. Well, Cousin Fuzzy, I'd better be going, or I won't be in time for supper at Horse Creek Bill's. You see, I've just decided to go Sam and Stringer one better. Horse Creek and Beezie won't know me, if you didn't, and I'll eat with 'em before I shoot!"

Lippert had known the Ripshin Mountain Greggs very well, indeed, but he was aghast at this. He liked the two Elmores. They'd been kind to him. He cursed the old blood law under his breath.

"Wait—" he began, as his cousin stepped through the doorway and into the twilight. "Ef I war you, i-god, I—I wouldn't do that!"

There was no response. The beat of weary hoofs filled his ears, died away. The last of the killer Greggs was gone.

WHEN Hite hallooed at the gate before the rambling old hewn-log house that was home to Elmore and his wife, dusk was falling. Horse Creek Bill came to the door.

"Good evening," very glibly said Hite. "My name is Jones, A. P. Jones. I'm on my way to Maysville, and I've got sort of mixed up in the trails. Could you—er—give me supper, and then set me on the right road?"

Bill Elmore—tall and lean and bronzed—hurried down to the gate.

"Why, shore, Mr. Jones," he drawled. "We never turn a stranger away. Better spend the night with us though, and go on to town tomorr'. We got a comp'ny bedroom. Tie yore hoss to one o' them palin's, and come on in. We was jest ready to set down to supper. After we've e't, we'll put the hoss up and feed him. I'm Bill Elmore. Not Bays Mountain Bill, Hoss Creek Bill."

"Certainly glad to meet you." Gregg was on the ground now. "I've been looking through the mountains for coal prospects, Mr. Elmore."

Together they moved toward the house. "Don't think you'll find any coal, Mr. Jones," Elmore said. "All timber country, this is. Oak and poplar, mostly."

Evidently he had just come in from the lumber camp a mile distant, for he still had on his broad black hat. As he entered the lighted dining room he took it off. Gregg likewise removed his headgear. She who had been Beezie Anson was thirty now, half buxom, and pretty as of yore. She stood at the head of the dining table, hospitably beaming. Hite Gregg was conscious of a tightening of the organ in his chest that served as a heart. Proudly Horse Creek introduced his wife. The two men then sat down on opposite sides of the table. Their hats they had dropped to the floor near their chairs, mountaineer fashion.

"Ef we had only knowed you was a-comin', Mr. Jones," Beezie said, "we'd 'a' killed a couple young chickens."

"Why, you've got plenty, Mrs. Elmore, plenty," Gregg said. Inwardly he rejoiced. What a perfect hell of a joke this was! It would be going Sam and Stringer one better, surely. "I don't—er—see any children. You haven't any children?"

"Two," answered Horse Creek. "A boy and a girl. Little Beezie and Little Bill. Old Grandsir Anson, my wife's pappy, he's so crazy about 'em that he keeps 'em at his house half o' the time! Beezie, honey, you don't need to wait on the table. Set right down and eat with us. They's lots o' room."

"No, Bill, I reckon I'd better—"

She broke off short as she noted that the

visitor was staring hard toward the doorway that led into the unlighted living room. Standing there was a tall and grizzled man in blue serge, with his right hand on the butt of a holstered Colt Police .38 revolver.

"Why, hello, Sheriff!" smilingly cried Horse Creek Bill. "You're jest in time for supper. Meet Mr. Jones here—city man prospectin' for coal. Sheriff John Ford, Mr. Jones. Set down here aside o' me, John. Beezie, fix him a plate, honey; won't you?"

He wondered at Ford's stealing in like that. At once the officer explained. "The horse at the gate, I couldn't figure out whose it was. Well, I've got some news for you that might be bad, Horse Creek. Hite Gregg escaped the pen, and it's likely he headed back here. I reckon you understand."

"Who is Hite Gregg?" casually inquired Hite Gregg.

Ford had stepped quickly to the dining-room window and drawn the shade all the way down. He sank, his hat in his lap, into a chair beside Elmore's.

"Gregg, Mr. Jones," he answered, "is the last of a bunch of mountain men who were born to kill. It was in them exactly as poison is in a rattlesnake. Beezie, I brought along sandwiches from town, and all I want is coffee."

"I certainly hope you get your man, Sheriff," Gregg said.

INWARDLY he winked at himself, so to speak. This really was a perfect hell of a joke. The presence of the sheriff—not the one who had arrested him nine years before—only made the joke greater. He wished that Sam and Stringer could know! When he was ready for the climax, he would shoot Elmore with one hand, knock the lamp off the table with the other, and be gone before the officer could collect his wits.

Ford took his coffee black, nodded thanks to the woman, and sipped the hot liquid with gusto. Gregg, who had been inordinately hungry, was bolting his food now. On his wife's account, Elmore steered

the conversation into pleasant channels. The lumber company, he said, was to make him a camp superintendent within a month or so; hundred and sixty a month; he meant to repair the old house, get Beezie some nice new furniture, buy toys for Little Bill and a big doll for Little Beezie.

Suddenly he put down his knife and fork, and reached sidewise to the floor for his broad hat. "We-ell, I reckon I've had enough supper; and mebbe I better go out and look after them hosses."

Gregg, also, had finished. His eyes were filled with the old murder lust. His right hand was stealing under his coat.

"I want you to know who's doing this, Horse Creek, I'm—"

There was a shattering roar, acrid powder smoke, the sickening thump of a man's body on the floor. Beezie cried out. A strong arm encircled her waist, swept her into the living room darkness. The sheriff was on his feet, staring. It had been a matter of instinct for him to snap a hand to his holster. He almost shouted: "What did you shoot Jones for, Horse Creek?"

"Jones—" Elmore's lips seemed stiff—"it's Hite Gregg. See the gun there in his hand? Dead, but still hangin' on to it!"

He caught up the gun, went on: "John,

he fooled all o' us but my wife. I seen her go death white. She said words to me using her lips without any sound. '*That's Hite Gregg!*' she said to me. Beezie—stay where you are—how did you know it was him, Beezie?"

From the living room darkness came the woman's shaken voice: "I'd been wonderin' about one thing. The city men which has been here, they never dropped their hats on the floor by their chairs when they set down to eat; always hung 'em somewhere, or held 'em in their laps. I kept thinkin' about him, s'posed to be a city man, and talkin' like one, puttin' his hat on the floor like you. And then—right at the last—I seen cave-black killer hate in his eyes, and it—it come to me like lightnin', who he was."

"God love you, honey," Elmore said. "Here, Sheriff, is yore gun. I snuck it out o' yore holster when I bent down for my hat. I'm shore Hite would 'a' seen the gun and beat me to the trigger, ef I hadn't—"

"I get you," Ford cut in. "You shot through your hat! He meant to eat with you, and then kill you. Devil of a joke—on Gregg. Take hold there, Horse Creek, and let's carry this dead rattlesnake out of the house."

THE END

Geographical Oddities in the Americas

IF someone asked you whether Reno or Los Angeles was farther west, you would probably say, "Why, Los Angeles is surely farther west than Reno, Nevada!" But it isn't. Look again at the atlas and note the sweeping incurve of the California coast. Reno is about a hundred miles closer to Asia than is Los Angeles.

And then again—Find Cleveland, Ohio, on the map. Would you believe it is seven miles farther east than Jacksonville, Florida? Yet it is.

To reach the nearest part of Canada, from Detroit, Michigan, one must travel due south! A bend in the Detroit River accounts for this peculiarity.

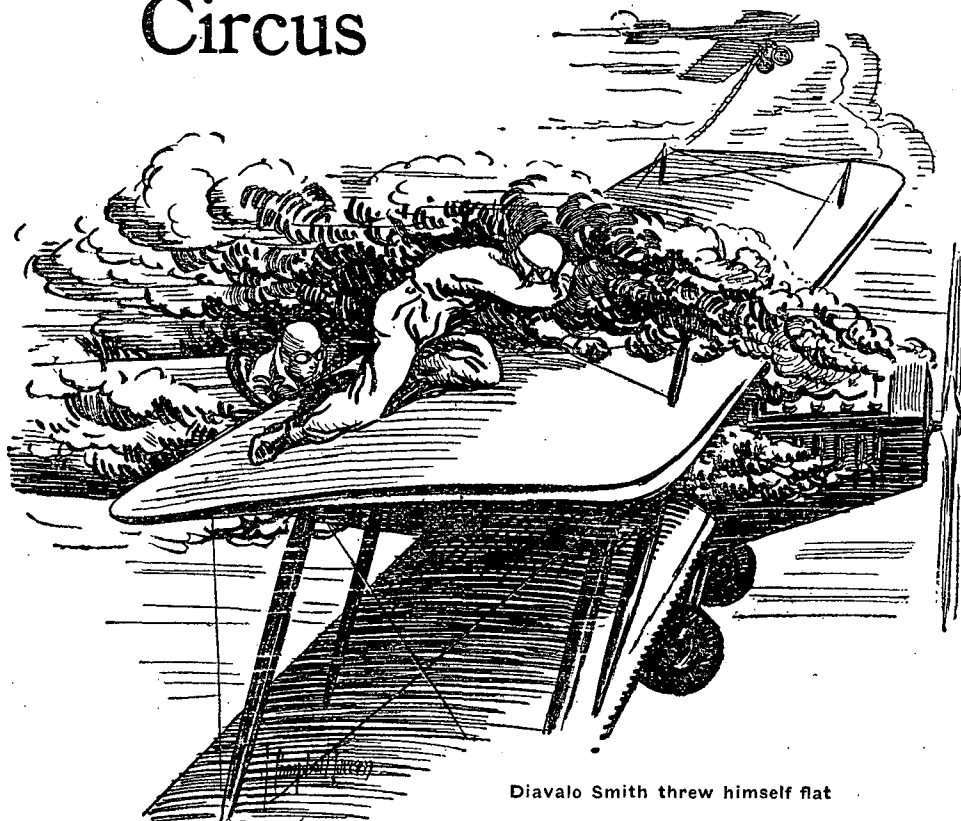
Of course you know that the sun rises in the Pacific and sinks in the Atlantic, down in the Canal Zone; and ships travel from west to east when passing from the Atlantic to the Pacific!

At Arica, in Chile, the Pacific shore line lies *almost as far east* as Portland, Maine! Thus the Pacific Ocean is east of New York in one spot upon the Western Hemisphere.

—Betty Wood McNabb.

Flying Circus

By
GEORGE BRUCE



Diavolo Smith threw himself flat

*One thing about the Ace Flying Circus: It kept its schedules
—even if it burned up while doing it*

FOREWORD

CHAPTER XIV.

SPRINGFIELD, ABOUT 1925.

IMMORTALS OF THE AIR was the title those intrepid aviators of the Ace Flying Circus gained for themselves when, in 1919, they set out from San Francisco to tour the country.

A dozen of them, headed by Ken Morey, the manager, barnstormed in every section of the land, in hamlets and cities, under any and all conditions. One rule Morey insisted upon: The schedule must be kept.

A note of discord entered when Buell, one of the pilots, turned sour. He was suspected of causing the death of Jinx Jones, young stunt artist, but it could not be proved on him. He was expelled from the Circus, but promised trouble later.

THE office of the *State Record* was on the west side of a broad street. A very beautiful tree-bordered street in a very beautiful city. The State House blocked the north end of the street. Running south from the Capitol was a very busy business section with imposing stores on both sides of the street. Farther south the street became a boulevard flanked by private residences.

This story began in the *Argosy* for November 30

It was a two way street, divided by a forty foot space in the middle given over to grass, flower beds, and the street car tracks. The trolley wires were suspended from ornate poles, and made a net above the middle of the street traversing its entire length.

There was a forty foot lane for northbound traffic and a forty foot lane for southbound traffic.

Springfield was justly proud of its principal thoroughfare.

The *State Record*, the most powerful paper in the State outside of Chicago, was sponsoring the appearance of the Ace Flying Circus in Springfield. For six days its front page had been given over to thrilling pictures and more thrilling word accounts of what the good people of the city could expect. People squinted at this staid daily which had suddenly taken on the guise of a circus poster . . . and waited for the big show.

Among those who waited were the Governor of the State and members of the State Legislature. The Legislature was in session, which meant that the Governor was in his office.

"At noon sharp the droning of motors over the heads of the people of Springfield will herald the advent of the most famous flying organization in the world," shouted the *State Record* on its front pages. "A thrill a minute! Beginning with the sensational free exhibition over the roof of the *State Record* Building. A man will change from airplane to airplane, in mid-air, the most sensational spectacle of the century, proudly brought to the people of Springfield by the *State Record*! See Diavolo Smith! See Loop King Bones, Barrel Roll Early, Upside-down Taylor! See the performers and performances which have stunned millions of Americans. THE WORLD FAMOUS ACE FLYING CIRCUS IN ACTION OVER SPRINGFIELD!"

Ken Morey cursed softly to himself and regarded the four airplanes which had limped to a landing on the Fair Grounds outside Springfield. He regarded glower-

ing, gray skies, out of which a thirty mile wind whistled. He regarded rolling masses of cumulo-nimbus piling up on the north-east horizon.

"Four ships!" he choked. "Four ships . . . and we're scheduled to open in Springfield in twenty minutes. Four lousy ships to give a show! That's the kind of co-operation I get." He glared at Taylor, Early, Bones and Monk Russell.

"It wasn't exactly a picnic making the jump here," said Taylor quietly. "That wind is blowing plenty upstairs. Headwind all the way. Scattered us to hell and gone. Half the time you couldn't see the ground . . ."

"Eight ships . . . scattered to hell and gone over the cockeyed countryside," moaned Morey. "Eight pilots, picking wild flowers somewhere, loafing on the job . . . and a show to give in twenty minutes. With the Governor of the State and every big shot in the State waiting to get a load of the Ace Circus!"

There was an awkward silence.

"Well, we'll give the show!" snarled Morey. "You guys get in there and fly so fast nobody will be able to count how many ships. Give 'em something to look at."

TAYLOR'S face was dubious. "I just managed to crawl in here," he told Morey. "For a while I thought I wouldn't make it. I came in with ten pounds oil pressure on the clock. I probably got a couple of loose bearings and the motor is pumping oil, losing oil pressure."

Morey's nose was a little red spot in the center of his face.

"Don't tell me your troubles!" he barked at Taylor. "You're supposed to keep these lousy crates flying. I don't care if you've got five pounds oil pressure. That show has to go on. You're flying one of the plane change ships. You and Early are the plane change team. That change is going to be made, over the *Record* Building, at noon, if I have to tear up every crate in the outfit. Now get going—you got fifteen minutes."

He piled into the red Stevens and took off for the center of town.

A mechanic changing the oil in Taylor's ship looked up with grave eyes. He was feeling the oil between his fingers.

"The damned oil is full of babbitt metal," he told Taylor. "The bearings are gone. We have to change this motor. Jerk this one out and bolt another in place."

"No time," said Taylor grimly. "Due over town."

"The con rods will go through the crankcase as sure as hell," warned the mechanic.

"Maybe it'll hold up until I can get back. I'll take it easy."

The mechanic poured oil into the motor, shook his head, twisted the prop, and Taylor climbed into the ship. With him climbed Diavalo Smith. Jack Early, flying the top plane in the plane change, took off, the plane change ladder fastened to his right wing, waiting to be dropped.

One after another the four ships on the field fell into the formation, whined in over Springfield.

The streets were black with people. They stood shoulder to shoulder in the streets. Capitol Avenue was a seething mass of people. The street was choked from curb to curb in front of the *State Record* office.

A knot of spectators crowded the Capitol steps. The Legislature and the Governor and his staff.

The droning of motors sounded over the city, and four red ships, flying fast, pounced upon the roof tops, diving down, faster and faster, pulling up with a screaming of motors and a drumming of wings.

Looping, rolling, twisting, wings brushing the roof tops, they cavorted for ten minutes.

Then two of the ships made a wide turn, went down wind, dropped to bare flying speed, and a dull roar went up from the crowd. A white figure appeared on the top wing of the lower ship. At the same instant an almost invisible ladder dropped from the lower wing of the top ship.

THE two ships jockeyed with infinite care, the top ship coming in slowly and carefully over the bottom ship. The ships were close now, not more than four hundred feet over the crowd. The spectators could see every move. They saw Diavalo Smith reach out to clutch the dangling rungs of the change ladder.

And then there was a shocking, ripping sound, and a smear of black smoke from the lower ship. It staggered, lurched, and Diavalo Smith, his foot braced around the cabane strut on the top wing of that stricken ship, threw himself flat on his face on the wing to escape being shaken off onto the heads of the crowd below.

There was an instant of stunned surprise in which no one moved or made a sound. The faint whistling of gliding wires came down out of the sky. The top ship, with the ladder still dangling from under its wings, drew away slowly.

The ugly black column of smoke poured from the nose of the lower ship, and the ship was settling. The thousands in the streets waited for that black smoke to gush with red flame. And as they waited they kept eyes fixed on the white shape, still out on the wing tip; a white shape, crawling, an inch at a time, over the surface of the crippled ship, toward the center section, clawing at the smooth upper wing surfacing with finger tips.

Ken Morey erupted. The red Stevens was standing in front of the newspaper office. Close to it were parked half a dozen motorcycles belonging to the official escort provided by the city—policemen. He shrieked at them as he yanked open the fire siren on the front of the Stevens.

"Clear the streets! Shove these people up on the side streets. He has one chance—to land in the street! Hurry!"

The sirens on the half dozen motorcycles blended with the siren on the red Stevens. The policemen rode into the crowd, bullied it, shouted, implored, while Morey wheeled the Stevens forward, added his labors.

At first the movement of the mass was stubborn, stupefied, until they understood that the smoking red thing overhead had

no place to go but down, and one chance to make a landing—in the street. The movement became a rush. The thousands poured into the side streets. A miracle was taking place. An opening was being made on the street, it was emptying.

Overhead, taut, white-faced, alert, Upside-down Taylor understood what was going on down below. He knew that the street was being cleared for him. He knew that it was the street . . . or a housetop. He nursed that four hundred feet of altitude. Time after time the crippled ship stalled, tried to spin and he beat it to the punch. The acrid, choking smoke from the ruined motor swirled about his head, blinding him, suffocating him. At any instant that motor might burst into flame.

A white shape dropped in front of his face. Diavalo crawling down into the front seat after the perilous trip across the top wing.

THE ship stalled fast. It was hanging over the roof of the *Record* Building.

Taylor eased it around in a bank, he pointed the nose to the street. He leveled off over the tops of the trees, slipped quickly to the left to escape branches, back to the right to get in under those branches . . . and the wheels touched the pavement, and rolled.

And he was down. Down in a space of a hundred yards which had been cleared of spectators. Down amid a sea of people, a welter of trolley wires and poles, under a canopy of trees. He sat there for a long moment in the cockpit, his legs suddenly weak and trembling, his vision clouded.

The red Stevens rolled up in front of the plane. Morey's white, strained face looked out of the car.

"Nice going," he said quietly. "Nice landing! Hurt?"

Taylor shook his head. He had no voice.

"Well, let's go!" barked Morey. "Let's get that motor out of there."

Taylor stared at him.

"Jeez! We can't let a ship stand in the street, can we?" demanded Morey. "Block

traffic, raise hell in general—and besides we've got a show at the field at three o'clock, and we need this ship!"

He whirled on a motorcycle policeman. "Beat it out to the field and tell the boys to haul me a motor in here on a truck," he commanded.

The policeman took off, his siren shrieking.

"Get me a wrecking car with a chain hoist from a garage!" he ordered a second policeman. "And tell the guy to bring a tool kit along with all sizes of wrenches."

That policeman took off.

"Keep this street clear," he barked at the rest of the policemen. "We need elbow room."

The wrecking car came from a garage with two excited mechanics on the front seat. There was a crane extending over the back end of the wrecking car, a crane and a heavy chain.

"Perfect!" gloated Morey. "Let's get to work."

They unbolted the motor from its mount. Taylor took down the fuel lines, uncoupled the instruments. The chain went around the four hundred pound motor in a lifting hitch. The mechanics cranked on the crane.

The motor came out of its cradle, swung clear, was dropped into the body of the wrecking truck.

The faint sound of a siren grew louder and louder. A motorcycle came into the street leading the red crash wagon of the Circus. A crew jumped out of the car as it drew abreast of the plane in the street. There was a motor in the crash wagon.

"Move, damn it, move!" drove Morey.

The sling went under the new motor, lifted it out of the crash wagon into the nose of Standard. The motor mounting bolts were pushed home, buckled down. The gas lines were connected, the instruments coupled. The radiator went on, was fastened down, connected. Then a prop from the crash wagon was bolted onto the crankshaft of the motor.

"Stand clear!" ordered Morey.

Taylor stared at him.

"Get in!" shouted Morey. "What the hell are you waiting for!"

TAYLOR got in. The crash wagon crew cranked on the propeller. After the third attempt the motor hit, swung the prop. Taylor ran it up, giving it the throttle carefully. The ship trembled. Men braced themselves against the wings, holding the ship from moving forward on the smooth street. The policemen were clearing the street, pushing the crowds up the side streets.

Taylor cut the gun. He looked at Morey.

"Now what?" he asked.

"Now what?" yelled Morey. "You flew it in here, didn't you? Well—fly it out! We've got a plane change to do!"

And Taylor flew it out with Diavalo Smith in the front seat. Roaring down the street, under the trees, hemmed in by trolley wires and light poles. He lifted the tail of the Standard off the ground, took the wheels up a foot, waited until he came to a street intersection two squares down the street, and pulled the Standard up in a screaming chandelle, clearing the copings of the buildings with only inches to spare.

Upstairs Jack Early cruised around with the plane change ladder still dangling below his wings. He was trying to make up his mind what to do and where to go. Any attempt at a normal landing with that ladder dragging meant a complete washout.

Then he saw Taylor coming up over the roof tops, and Taylor was signaling with his arm. He saw Diavalo Smith going out on the top wing. What he said was unprintable, but he went down, flew low over the top of Taylor's ship, jockeyed into position, put the ladder in Gordon Smith's hands—and Smith swung off into space, climbed the ladder, pulled it up after him, crawled into the cockpit, grinning like a monkey.

The two ships flew back to the Fair Grounds.

On the granite steps of the State Capitol the Governor of a great State stood as if in a trance and mopped his brow with mechanical movements of his hand while he

stared with blank eyes at the now empty heavens and listened to the receding droning of the two motors.

After a moment his mouth moved. "My God!" he half whispered to himself. "My God!"

At the same instant Ken Morey was pounding his fist on the desk of the managing editor of the *State Record*. Morey's jaw jutted and his eyes blazed.

"When the Ace Flying Circus contracts to do a plane change for a newspaper, it does the plane change!" he thundered at the editor. "Hell or high water, we make good!"

And the managing editor, his eyes dazed and his brain dizzy, was saying over and over: "Yes, Mr. Morey."

CHAPTER XV.

"BLOODY WILLIAMSON COUNTY"—1926.

SPLATTERED with blood, black with a record of violent years, of machine gunnings, shotgun slayings, bootleg murders, labor wars. Torn and rent by internal strife so that brothers went armed against brothers and mothers heaped curses upon sons. Highroads, coal stipples, speak-easies, private homes, city streets, splashed with the blood of men who had died during the black days.

Imported gunmen walking the streets, patrolling properties, enlisted as deputy sheriffs. Two sets of officials, elected by the fighting factions, both elected illegally, neither interested in the preservation of law and order, but interested only in the extermination of the "enemy" under the cloak of quasi-legal measures.

Bootleg gangs out of Chicago fighting a vicious war for control of the product in Bloody Williamson. Trucks, convoys, black touring cars racing over the roads at night, to tumble into ditches, smashing themselves, becoming funeral pyres for drivers and guards in the face of machine gun fire out of ambush. Pitched battles along the State roads, with crumpled bodies lying in the roads to greet the dawn.

Pitched battles between miners and imported gunmen at mine shafts.

Pitched battles in the dead of night as "posses" of armed raiders crashed into houses and murdered inmates in bed.

Pitched battles between crusading Prohibitionists and anti-Prohibitionists.

Day after day, month after month, year after year it all raged within the borders of Bloody Williamson. Until newspapers printed maps showing Williamson County in jet black. Until State Militia patrolled the streets with fixed bayonets and set up machine gun nests at street corners.

When the militia came, a brooding, ominous peace settled over Williamson County. The vicious fighting broke out anew before the pound of the marching feet of withdrawn soldiery ceased to echo in the streets.

A short, stocky, bigoted, fanatical murderer by the name of Vance Dalton, posing as the savior of Bloody Williamson, appearing from somewhere outside the State, with two guns strapped down on his legs, the light of a sadist in his eyes, appointing himself an arm of the law, conducting bloody raids without authority, placing himself at the head of his group, inundating Bloody Williamson under new waves of terrorism, murder, and arson.

Vance Dalton swaggering into court to answer charges, his guns in plain sight, backed by a score of his armed thugs, sneering at the judge, swaggering out again because no judge or jury dared to convict him. Vance Dalton, telling the people of Bloody Williamson, "I am the Law," and murdering his enemies in cold blood in the name of the law.

The smoke pall of destruction, the lightning flashes of violence, the writhings of murder hung over Bloody Williamson, and in the midst of it all, the Ace Flying Circus scheduled an exhibition at Herrin.

WHEN Morey rolled through the main street of Herrin, his practiced eye told him that something was very, very wrong. Ordinarily people do not go about the streets with guns bulging in

shoulder holsters, under coats, or in plain sight. Neither do they sit eternally on curb stones with Winchester 30-30s draped over knees. All towns have sound—but Herrin had a queer, hushed silence. The silence of fear and of breathless expectancy.

On both sides of the street, men sat with those Winchesters draped over their knees, staring blankly at men who sat on the other side of the street in exactly the same manner. If a firecracker had exploded in the middle of that street, there would have been a quick, searing line of flame from those Winchesters, a pitched battle in the streets of Herrin.

Here and there little groups of men in khaki hurried along the streets, seemingly bent upon mysterious and dangerous errands.

And those blank, tense, unsmiling faces and hostile eyes followed the red Stevens all the way to the hotel.

At the hotel the clerk seemed to be in a state of hypnosis. It was necessary to speak to him twice to attract his attention. His eyes were looking out the plate glass windows of the hotel, toward the street. A street strangely empty of automobiles, of carriages, of all traffic and all people. Excepting for those armed men sitting on the curbs, Herrin might have been an abandoned city, abandoned in a breath, its people having fled an invisible terror.

"What the hell is the matter with this joint?" demanded Morey angrily of the clerk. "Sleeping sickness?"

The clerk didn't smile. He merely looked at Morey's face.

"Vance Dalton is in town," he said tonelessly as if that explained everything.

"Well, so is the Ace Flying Circus. Show some life."

Ken Morey checked in at the hotel. He went out to the field to await the coming of the Circus ships. The ground trucks were already on the field, the barbed wire was strung, the concession tents were up, the gas drums were piled up.

At eleven the planes came in, flying the tight formation, circling the city before landing. They taxied to the line. Just

as the last of them pulled into position, four automobiles halted at the side of the road bordering the field. Out of the four cars stepped a dozen men. They were carrying Winchesters. One man, dressed in khaki riding breeches and a khaki shirt, a campaign hat on his head, boots on his feet and legs, and two .45 Colt automatics swinging in tied-down holsters as he walked, led the procession.

THEY crawled under the wire. They came silently. They spread out a little. The men with the rifles stood, barrels resting in crooked arms, right hands gripping stocks.

The silence grew static, jagged, dangerous.

The little man with the two guns looked about him, looked at the men of the Circus.

"Just what do you expect to do here?" he demanded of Taylor.

"I'm the manager of this Circus," said Morey. "If you have questions to ask, ask me."

Two cold eyes, ice flecked with little spots of red, passed over Morey's face, looked him over, up and down. A white face, bleak, without expression, looked out from under the shadow of the campaign hat. The face of a killer. A ruthless face. The face of a man drunk with his own power and his ability to enforce his dictates.

"You heard me," he said slowly. "Just what do you expect to do here?"

Something flared up in Morey. The tone of the man's voice flicked him on a suddenly raw surface, his eyes narrowed and the flanges of that little round nose flared.

"You read the newspapers, don't you?" he asked. "You can read the name on those airplanes and trucks. This is the Ace Flying Circus, and we're giving a show in Herrin today."

"I was not consulted," said the hard, thin lipped mouth.

Morey stared at him. "You were not consulted?" he repeated. "Who in the hell are you that we should consult you?"

For a long moment death trod very lightly on the sod of that field. It raged in

the man's eyes. It was in the tightening of hands on the stocks of Winchester rifles. It was in the sudden starkness of standing bodies. Morey stood there, his hands hanging, his eyes fixed on the cold eyes in front of him.

"I'm Vance Dalton," said the khaki-clad man. "People usually consult me about things like this."

"We're in this town under the auspices of the local paper. We have a lease on this field, legally executed. We pay our way where we go, operate inside the law, and pay graft to nobody. So, why should we see you, Mr. Dalton?"

Every man in the Ace Flying Circus knew the name Vance Dalton. Every man knew his record. It had been spread over the front pages of newspapers for weeks. They stood there, behind Morey, silent, tense.

"Just a matter of policy," informed Dalton in the same cold voice. "In times like this Williamson County is suspicious of all strangers. I know nothing about you. I do not think it good public policy to give such an exhibition, at a time like this—an exhibition which would probably gather a large crowd—and out of which serious trouble might occur."

He stopped. He looked at Morey as if that settled the matter.

Morey looked at his watch. "Get going, boys," he told the pilots quietly. "It's just about time to take off for the noon show over town."

DALTON'S eyes were suddenly glinting. "I said, Mr. Morey, that I thought it would be better if you cancelled your Herrin exhibitions!"

Morey took a step forward. He stood very close to Dalton. A contemptuous laugh broke out of his hard mouth.

"Listen, Dalton, get this," he said, and his teeth clipped the words short. "In this neck of the woods, you're supposed to be some kind of a big shot. Just what you are I don't know, and I don't give a damn. To me, at the present moment, you look like a Boy Scout gone sour, running around with

a lot of stooges armed to the teeth. You've got a reputation as a trouble maker, and as being dynamite. Maybe you are—as I said, I wouldn't know—and I don't care.

"But get this straight. The Ace Flying Circus never broke a date in its life. It never has been bluffed by anybody. It has never cancelled a show, and it never will! We're going to show in Herrin, on this field, on this day and date.

"I don't know what your racket is in coming here, but if you have any idea of making trouble for this outfit, let me remind you that every pilot you see in front of you is an ex-army officer. They've all seen men with guns before—machine guns—and licked hell out of 'em. They eat trouble, they live on it, and they love it. More, every man in front of you is a national figure, known to millions and millions of Americans who never heard of Williamson County or Vance Dalton. Now—if you want to begin the trouble—*begin*—only I promise you, *we'll* finish it! And if we can't the Federal government will finish it for us!"

Dalton stood there. He listened without a sign. The expression on his face never changed. That terrible, jagged tautness hung over the field.

Then suddenly, Dalton smiled, a white, thin smile which merely moved the corners of his mouth.

"I have every respect for a man with sufficient courage to fight for his rights, Mr. Morey," he said. "My idea in coming out here was to prevent trouble which may occur on this field this afternoon." He paused. The smile expanded a trifle. "After talking with you I am convinced that you will be able to handle the situation. I withdraw my suggestion that you cancel the exhibitions. In fact—I'll stand by to render you every assistance in case of trouble."

"That's fine," said Morey in the same growling voice. "But we won't have any trouble."

Dalton offered his hand. Morey took it. "I'm glad to have talked with you, Mr. Morey," said Dalton.

Morey said nothing. Dalton walked away, twenty steps or more, with his armed guard following. Then he stopped, retraced his steps.

"**B**Y the way," he said casually. "Do you happen to know a flier by the name of Buell?"

Morey jumped at the name. Then he held himself in iron restraint. The men behind him crowded forward.

"Yeah, I know him," admitted Morey.

"Would you—strictly off the record—mind telling me what kind of man he is?"

Morey was silent for a minute. Then his voice broke from between his teeth, grating.

"He's a murdering rat," he told Dalton.

Dalton nodded thoughtfully. "Good pilot?"

"One of the best."

Another thoughtful nod. "Capable of night flying?"

"Certainly."

The bleak smile came back over Dalton's mouth. "I thought so," he said. "I had an idea this Buell was responsible."

"For what?" demanded Morey.

"In the last two weeks there have been three cases of bombing from the air at night," explained Dalton. "A single plane, just appearing in the sky over certain points, dropping bombs, disappearing—losing itself. Night before last, at a cross road near here—fifteen miles out on the State highway, in fact—a roadhouse was bombed, five people were killed and several more shockingly wounded by the bombs. The roadhouse burned to the ground after the bombings. One of the wounded burned with it—alive. That was the work of an expert flier . . . someone mentioned the name of Buell to me. Well, thank you."

He turned on his heel and strode off the field.

"Buell!" repeated Morey silently. "Buell . . . hell, yes . . . he's the guy they've been after . . . nobody else. It's his kind of an assignment, murdering people without giving them a chance, at night. He's made a tie-up with that Chi-

cago bootlegging gang that's trying to mop up on this territory. He's doing the flying and the bombing."

His hands were clenched into fists. His eyes glittered.

Suddenly he whirled on the men. "What the hell are you standing there for!" he snarled at them. "You've got ten minutes to make the show over town. Get going!"

That afternoon was unique in the annals of the Circus. Ten thousand people came out to the field. Men, hard faced, with alert, suspicious eyes, stood around, watching . . . watching. Men with gun bulges under coats, or with rifles in plain sight. Men who hated the guts of other men in the same crowd—hated them to death.

And the pilots of the Circus flew through five hours of tense, subdued excitement, waiting for the bark of a rifle or the crash of an automatic, waiting for hell to break loose on the field, waiting for spurting flame, whining bullets.

The show went on, the motors sounding like machine guns.

And Morey paced back and forth on the field, hard, challenging, ready—for anything.

But Bloody Williamson's guns remained silent that afternoon.

DURING that night the men of the Circus were awakened by the sound of a sub-machine gun in action. They leaped up in bed. The gun chattered for only an instant. The instant was punctuated with rifle and pistol shots. Then there was silence, deep, trembling silence.

"What a peaceful little joint!" growled Jack Early, putting his head back on the pillow. "Just a couple of guys having an argument, I suppose."

At seven in the morning, Morey went to a garage on the main street to get his red Stevens out of over-night storage. He walked along, his head down, thinking. He stopped in front of the garage. He looked at the door queerly for an instant. The big door was closed, but the little door, just big enough to admit a man, was swinging open.

He called through the door. "Hey! What's the chance of getting my car?"

There was no answer from inside the garage. He cursed and eased his body through the little door. He walked up to his car in the near darkness. He had parked it himself the night before. He started the motor, switched on the lights. Suddenly he was sitting rigid, his face white, his hands gripping the wheel, sweat breaking out on his forehead.

Across the floor of the garage, under the glare of his headlamps, were six bodies, flopped about, arms outflung, faces contorted with the knowledge of death. Six men, made grotesque by ordinary clothing, shot to death, riddled, and the wall of the garage in back of them was riddled, chipped, gouged by slugs. A wide pool of blood made a sticky red mass about them. The place was a shambles.

Morey climbed out of his car. He opened the big door of the garage. His feet crunched on brass jackets from exploded .45 cartridges. The uncertain light of early morning seeped into the garage. He drove the red Stevens out on the street, back to the hotel.

For the first hundred feet it left the perfect pattern of its tire treads marked on the pavement and on the asphalt. Marked in red.

The bodies were stiff, but no one had touched them. No one had investigated. No one dared.

The mark of Bloody Williamson, countersigned by Vance Dalton.

CHAPTER XVI.

DOG FIGHT.

MOREY said to the pilots, "Let's get the hell out of here. Get those ships rolling, get moving. This lousy place has me jittering."

And then they all looked up. A familiar sound came down to them. The sound of an airplane motor, flying high. The early morning sun was in their eyes as they looked for the plane.

Morey spoke again. "It's a K6 Oriole," he declared. "That guy is sure getting himself some early morning air. Wonder where he's from."

They made out the ship. They saw it was all black, made a black cross against the still roseate glow in the sky. It flew over the field.

Some one screamed out of a throat suddenly thick with fear, "Look out—!"

The earth in front of them erupted flame, shook, flung them down, drove the acrid odor of high explosives into nostrils, blinded them. There was the sound of splintering wood and ripping linen. Fragments of red planes flew about them, whirling crazily.

There was a second shock and concussion, and a third.

And in the midst of the inferno, Ken Morey reared to his feet, his eyes glaring, his legs buckling under him, and staggered over the reeling earth. He gathered speed out of his own lurching momentum. After a moment he was racing through fire and debris toward one of the red ships, unhurt, standing on the line.

"He belongs to me!" he was yelping insanely. "He belongs to me!"

He threw himself into the cockpit of the red ship. A mechanic came from somewhere, dared explosion, fire and splinters, and twisted the prop. The Hiss hit on the first pull through compression. Without warming the motor, Morey opened the throttle, ruddered the ship around with a vicious blast of the gun, sent it skimming and roaring, cross-wind, over the field, holding it a foot over the ground until he built up a tremendous speed. Then he zoomed in a wild rush of wings.

That was the second time in all the years of the Circus that Ken Morey had flown one of the red ships. The first was the day he flew Buell's ship in Jinx Jones' funeral procession. The men of the Circus had almost forgotten that Morey was a pilot—and a war pilot.

But dazed and shaken by the bombing, they remembered that he was a pilot—a war pilot—as they watched the red Standard snatched off the ground. Fire burned,

sullenly and fiercely, at three of the twelve ships. Two more were reduced to broken wood and torn linen.

Over the crackle of the flame came the angry throb of the motor in Morey's ship as he drove it up and up, after that black Oriole.

Perhaps Buell knew that it was Ken Morey in the Circus ship climbing after him. Or, perhaps he believed it was Jack Early, who once had rolled wheels over his wings and had forced him down. Perhaps with Buell it was merely an exhibition of bravado. Perhaps he *wanted* Morey or Early or anyone else connected with the Circus to climb to the attack.

No matter what the motive, he flew about the field in a wide circle, while the red Standard climbed in rapid sweeping spirals.

AT three thousand feet the two ships came together. Buell in the black K6 Oriole swept out of a vertical bank, released top rudder, went over in a diving wing-over, pushing the throttle open as he dived. The thin scream of his motor knifed down to earth. His black ship was like a winged projectile.

And Morey, in the cockpit of the Standard, his hand gripping the stick, watched him come through narrowed, fierce eyes.

When the Oriole was fifty yards away, ripping down on him, Morey discovered the reason for Buell's bravado. At that distance, Buell was a leather-helmeted, leather-coated figure in the Oriole's cockpit. He seemed to rise a little in the seat. His arms lifted.

Morey snatched at the controls of the Standard, pushed over the stick, kicked on top rudder.

Those leather clad arms of Buell's supported a Thompson sub-automatic machine gun. The muzzle of the Tommy disappeared, dissolved in a red smear of flame.

The space about Morey's head was filled with the sound of crackling whiplashes. Heavy .45 slugs ripped through a panel of the wing. He released the top rudder and the Standard slipped with a rush. Then

he pulled back slowly on the stick, knocked the wings level, and fought for altitude.

His teeth were grinding. That was the answer! Big, bad Buell wanted a Circus pilot to attack after the bombing. He knew Circus ships were unarmed. He wanted the odds of a machine gun against empty hands.

The Standard groaned, threshed its wings at the top of the stiff climb, threatened to stall. Morey's head tilted over the edge of the cockpit. He saw Buell in the black ship, following after him. The Standard could outclimb the Oriole, could outmaneuver it. Morey pushed the stick forward against the firewall and kicked left rudder. The Circus crate went over on a wing, dived, and the propeller spun madly. White flame vomited from the short exhaust stacks of the Hisso. The Standard was a red smear of velocity. It plunged recklessly for the nose of Buell's ship.

It seemed that Buell was alarmed, or he sought to outmaneuver Morey, to get into position for another murderous blast from the Tommy gun. He whirled the Oriole in a right vertical, went diving away from the Standard. Nose down, throttle open, the wind shrieking through wires and struts. The wings drumming, the nose drift wires growing taut. The flying wires singing in fiendish glee.

The two ships plunged earthward. And Morey, veering in quickly, pounced on Buell's tail, roared in behind him, bucked in the way of Buell's propeller, hung on like a bulldog, while Buell swerved and twisted to shake him off.

AND a hammering pulse began a steady beating in Morey's chest. The sense of power. The knowledge that the Standard was outflying and outdiving the black Oriole. Foot by foot it closed on the tail section of the Oriole. A queer coldness filled Morey. A coldness that blew through his brain and made his senses razor keen. A coldness that seemed numbing to the sense of any danger. His eyes, thin slits behind his goggles, were fixed on the flippers and rudder of the Oriole. They

were dead ahead of the Standard's propeller.

Buell twisted in his seat. For an instant he dared to leave his hands off the stick. The Tommy gun came up again. He fired over his own tail. The whiplashes around Morey's head snapped and crackled viciously. A strut frayed from an invisible impact.

But Morey was straining forward in the seat, watching the rudder and empennage of the black Oriole. He scarcely heard the rip and crack of slugs. The rudder was a foot in front of the Standard's nose. He grinned, whitely, his knuckles became a dead white. He banged the throttle forward—hard against the forward post. The Hisso gave another ounce of power, and the red ship dived more sharply, came up fast, seemed to telescope into the tail of Buell's black crate.

There was a rending sound, the sound of something crumpling and tearing free, and the red Standard, zooming like a hunting hawk, climbed straight up . . . and snarled around its spreader bar was Buell's rudder and fragments of Buell's flippers.

Morey's head was thrust over the side of the cockpit. He watched Buell fighting desperately to control a ship without controls. The tail of the Oriole lashed up and down, and wreckage streamed behind it. It veered crazily, lunged to the right, turned over on its back, whirled its wings.

And then Buell left it. He bailed out. He merely opened his safety belt, and fell out of his inverted ship.

Morey saw him going. His eyes left the threshing, writhing Oriole and followed Buell. He saw Buell's hand snatch for the rip cord ring—tug—and a pilot 'chute leaped out of an Irvin back-pack-type 'chute. It dragged the big 'chute out of the bag. It blossomed in space, white, billowing, and Buell's descent was checked. He seemed floating serenely, gently toward the earth, a thousand feet down.

Morey held the Standard poised for an instant, staring. Then the muscles of his jaw bulged and grew hard and his eyes glinted. He dived the Standard at the

parachute. Full gun, roaring down. He could see Buell's white face looking up at him, and Buell's hand dragging at the shrouds to slip the 'chute away from the diving red ship.

The parachute was like a cloud of white silk in Morey's face. It seemed tremendous, and then the wheels and spreader bar of the Standard struck the top of the 'chute—just caressed it, but a prop, its tips sheathed in polished copper, and turning at 2,200 r.p.m.'s, also caressed the silk of the 'chute, just as Morey pulled the Standard out of the dive.

HE looked down. He saw Buell's legs gyrating and his hands working desperately to guide the 'chute. He saw there was a little slice cut in the top of the 'chute . . . a dozen little slices, almost invisible, but with the wind pressure under them they opened like the lips of a white, bloodless wound.

Morey carried the Standard down, went around the 'chute in steep spirals.

One of the little slices in the top of Buell's 'chute suddenly grew larger—split from side to side, and air rushed through the vent. The floating 'chute increased the speed of its fall.

Fifty feet and the slice was a yawning, fraying opening in the silk, and the other little slices were growing. And the descent of the 'chute became rapid.

He saw Buell's face, white, contorted, looking up at him, as Buell's hands still worked at the useless shrouds.

Then the parachute split itself into ribbons. Buell's body fell with the rush of a dead weight, the shrouds snarling around him, the silk ribbons collapsing and blowing like streamers.

He fell faster than the Standard could dive.

Morey leveled the ship, watched, his face set and hard. At the end of an eternity which was not more than five seconds in length, the grotesque, leather clad thing wrapped in white ribbons struck the center of the field, bounced—as Jinx Jones had—and did not move again.

The men of the Circus, standing rooted, watched the fall of the Black Oriole, watched it smash itself against the earth and burst into explosion and flame. Watched Buell follow it, watched the black huddle of his broken, inert body in the center of the field. Watched with such intensity they never heard or saw Ken Morey's return to earth.

They heard him later. He snarled at them. "Come on, let's go. Let's get the hell away from here."

It was then they noticed that the spreader bar on the ship he had flown was broken, the axle bent, and a wheel flattened. Fragments of the black Oriole, like patches of putrid flesh, were still entangled in that spreader bar and wheel.

But Morey never so much as glanced at what was left of the K6 Oriole, nor at what was left of Buell. He abandoned the burned and bombed red ships of the Circus on the field. He touched a match to the gas tanks of the two ships which had been wrecked but had not burned.

And the Circus flew out of Bloody Williamson in the glare and roar and crackle and thick black smoke of flame.

CHAPTER XVII.

NEW YORK CITY, 1927.

THE end of the path of glory. It came to an end with the abruptness of a well marked road which suddenly runs over the edge of an abyss.

In one instant, at the height of its fame and fortune, the World Famous Ace Flying Circus came to an end. Big business took over flying. Big business, with stockholders and boards of directors and big business methods. There was no place in the scheme of big business for a Flying Circus. No place on its roster for men like Taylor, Early, Bones, Diavalo Smith. No need for names like "Barrel Roll," "Loop King" and "Upside-down." No need for the red Standards.

Ken Morey walked out of the office on the field at Teterboro. Across the river

the canyons of New York City reared mighty heads. He held a telegram in his hand. The telegram was from Washington. It was terse.

You will suspend stunt flying under the provisions of the Air Commerce Rules and Regulations adopted today and made law. You will suspend passenger carrying activities until such time as your planes are inspected and receive a certificate of air worthiness from an authorized inspector of this department. You will not engage in flying exhibitions of any nature without first having the approval of this department.

Morey read the telegram slowly, in a dead voice. The men of the Circus stood around him and after a moment the light went out of their eyes and they were staring stupidly, like men, guilty of no wrong, listening to an edict of banishment, of exile.

"Well, that's that," said Morey. He looked around him, at the men, at the red ships standing on the line. He was trying to remember those untold thousands of hours of flying, those hundreds of thou-

sands of paying passengers carried in those red ships without the slightest accident. A procession of towns, cities, hamlets crossed his memory, with the faces of thirty million spectators rapt, and staring, hypnotized by the drone of motors, and by the sunlight on the sleek hides of the red ships.

Morey turned away from them suddenly. He could not bear to look at their faces. A hard lump in his throat strangled him. His fingers crumpled the telegram. He dived into his office and closed the door.

Out of the window he watched them, turning away, hands hanging, shoulders suddenly sagging, heads lowered, eyes dead. Shuffling over the field. Not even speaking. Just shuffling. And the red ships were suddenly stark and lonely.

Shuffling, dead eyed, like exiles.

Mortals who had lived with the high gods, who had tasted the nectar reserved for Immortals.

That was the hell of it. There was no place in big business for them, and the telegram which hurled them back to earth did not mention Immortality.

THE END

On the Up and Up

THE Alps used to be considered high. They aren't; in fact, they're pretty low down. Mont Blanc, the highest Alpine peak, goes up 15,771 feet. That's nothing, compared to some of the main elevations of the earth.

Mt. Everest, in Indo-China, is 29,141 feet high. That's as far up as man can get on foot. There are many other Asiatic peaks so high up you can't see them—and have never heard of them.

South America's highest point is Mt. Aconcagua, in Chile and Argentine, 22,834 feet high.

North America, third highest of the continents, has Mt. McKinley, in Alaska, 20,299 feet up. Mt. Kibo, in Tanganyika Territory, is Africa's highest, 19,710 feet. Europe can do no better than 18,465 feet—Mt. Elbrus, in the Caucasus Mountains.

—Robert Fuller.

The Spotted Ethiopian

By ANTHONY RUD

Bug-Eye the giraffe wanted to be the leader of his herd, but first he had to undergo the gravest danger known to his kind

CENTURIES before the Chicago packing industry became modern and efficient, utilizing all of the hog but his squeal, wild, black tribesmen of Abyssinia and Somaliland were doing practically the same thing—to the ancestors of Bug-Eye the giraffe.

Bug-Eye, who stood eighteen feet tall at four years of age and was still growing, was not given to introspection. Had he been able to mull over the reason why he and his herd kept always to the open, low forest, or the still more open plateau, traveling swiftly and far at the first hint of alarm, he could have inventoried that immensely valuable commodity, himself, in the following terms:

1. Approximately sixty-five square feet of tough hide which makes highly prized and durable leather.

2. About 450 pounds of bone and meat. Fully fifty pounds of the meat is tender, delicate in flavor. In fact, it is considered the most tasty game in all Africa. Every scrap of bone is saved and exported to England, where it is made into buttons.

3. The tendons of the long legs, and the sinews of the still longer neck, are used by all Arabia for sewing thread which will never break, and also for the strings of all the weird musical instruments which moan and whine and plunk from Port Said to the Gulf of Aden.

4. Every scrap of entrails and waste is saved for lion bait. A lion can no more turn away from giraffe liver-and-lights than a house tabby can resist the lure of a catnip ball.

Wariness was born in Bug-Eye; and Nature gave him extraordinary advantages in the appliances of caution. In the first place he could see from two to four times as far as either of his two principal enemies—the lion and man. His height, of course.



All they had to do was to wait!

Then, those eyes! They were big, moist and mournful; not grouchy like those of a racing camel, but pleading and sentimental. From the first he could bug them outward at will, until, in the parlance of the street, "you could hang a derby hat on 'em!"

This gave the young giraffe fully three hundred and thirty degrees of vision without moving his head. The only part of a complete circle he could not see at all times was the thin segment directly behind his own small skull.

As soon as his long legs ceased to wobble under him Bug-Eye could make as good speed as a saddle horse. He did not realize the fact, but if something had come up to teach him a different gait he could have been the fastest creature on four legs. As it was, he ran instinctively in the fashion of his father, moving both legs on the right side at once, and both legs on the left side together. This made his pace a swift amble, when it might have been a terrific gallop.

Now at four years of age he was almost mature. His short-haired coat, a glossy orange-red mottled closely with chocolate spots, showed his perfect health. The markings imitated almost perfectly the sunshadows of foliage, so that when Bug-Eye browsed upon the tender leaves and buds of mimosas and other low trees he was practically invisible at five hundred yards.

He was built in a queer fashion which once made men say that his fore legs were much longer than the pair in the rear. As a matter of fact a difference of less than three inches existed; but the strange slope from his neck to his rump gave that optical illusion. No one could have ridden Bug-Eye bareback.

His body was short and triangular when viewed from the side, ending in a long, black-tufted tail exceedingly useful in whisking off the pestilential seroot flies, which will swarm upon and poison to death a bob-tailed horse.

Watching him eat would have sent shivers down the back of an ant-bear! He had a mottled red and black tongue, covered with warty-looking papillæ. When he was *not* eating this tongue was a mere

17 inches in length, about as long as from the elbow to the fingertips of a six-foot man.

BUT when he browsed and was just a trifle suspicious concerning the edibility of certain buds and leaves! That shivery tongue was stretchable; it could elongate and squirm forward out of his mouth like a thirty-inch serpent! It was adapted for grasping, too, like the trunk of an elephant. It reached out, grasped, and then held up for Bug-Eye's inspection any morsel he thought somewhat doubtful!

Bug-Eye ranged with a big herd when he was born and developed to the point of being able to run at all. The herd numbered thirty-four at this time, counting all the young and the drab-colored females. There were two bad lion scares; and one baby giraffe born when Bug-Eye was a year old broke a foreleg by stepping into the hole of a fennec, or bat-eared fox. The herd hung about there, mourning, sympathetic, uneasy; but there was nothing that could be done. The baby died and had to be abandoned.

Otherwise there were no fatalities, however, owing to the wisdom of Old Whistler, the herd leader. He was sharp with them all, ever ready to wheel and deliver twin punches with his thudding hoofs. And those hoofs could bowl over a lion.*

The herd leader, Old Whistler, was not the tallest, but he was the canniest of Bug-Eye's herd. When grazing, or sleeping, he sent out four sentinels, who gave the shrill alarm at the first sign of any creature approaching. To this could be attributed the size of his herd and the long record of safety.

Then dawned the day of the massacre.

* Livingstone, the explorer, saw a native carrier get the brunt of such a double blow from a surprised giraffe. In Dr. Livingstone's words: "Igochi somehow got near without the giraffe seeing or scenting him. Suddenly the animal whirled, striking backward in the manner of a stallion. Igochi was lifted into the air and hurled backward several feet. When we picked him up, we found four ribs were broken."

Old Whistler had led his subjects into the dwarf forest of the plateau in southern Abyssinia through which cuts the river known as Webi Shebeli. A swirling dust-storm came. This in itself was no hardship to Bug-Eye. He simply turned his tail to the wind, closed his eyes, and then kept his nostrils tightly closed most of the time by use of those extraordinary facial muscles which gave him such a capacity for queer expressions.

Of course he had to breathe; but he knew how to inhale slowly, sieving out the sand grains. The storm did not bother him or others in the herd—but it was the reason death came to so many, just the same.

Riding with the storm came a party of horsemen, black hunters who were returning empty-handed. The swirling dust took just this unfortunate moment to slide away in whirligigs to eastward—and right before the eyes of astonished blacks, as they lowered the protecting *zaroubs* from their faces, were dozens of the greatly desired giraffes! These creatures still had eyes and nostrils fast closed, and were probably unaware of the menace until the first tribesman let out a yell, swinging his great broadsword.

Then came snorts, whistles, and instant flight. But for many of the herd it was too late. The dozen or so of mounted blacks swung their swords, not attempting to kill any of the prey instantly, but hamstringing as many as possible, rendering them helpless to run.

Then, when the remnant of the herd had vanished, the horsemen came back, shouting gleefully from dry throats, to give quietus to the dragging animals on the ground, trying so gamely to haul themselves to safety.

FOR the hunters this was supreme luck. Each man had at least one carcass—and that meant comparative wealth for his family for at least a month. But when Bug-Eye and the others reassembled a few miles away there were only seventeen survivors. Bug-Eye himself was limping, bleeding from a deep cut across his rump, a

slash that had missed the fatal hamstringing by less than a foot.

Old Whistler himself was missing! Now that was a different matter entirely to what it would have been with almost any other wild animal that runs in a herd. Giraffes do not fight each other to the death. There may be a little mild noggling between the young bucks in rutting season, with one butting his vestigial (and bristle-tufted) horns into another's face. But real fighting does not happen. The leadership of the herd usually goes to the eldest buck.

Bug-Eye was as tall now as Snuffer, a mangy-looking old fellow probably twelve or fourteen at least. Snuffer's spots were sun-faded, and when he had to run any distance he wheezed asthmatically. For several seasons he had been almost an out-cast in the herd, unpopular with the females, but acting as a grouchy sort of lieutenant for Old Whistler. Now he assumed command.

Bug-Eye was a handsome creature, but still callow. He had arrogant notions, and now tried to disregard the leadership of Snuffer. There was no fight. The other males and the females herding their young at their sides, simply looked away at the distant horizon, disillusioning Bug-Eye. His time might come; but right now not a single one of the herd would accept his leadership! They might despise and dislike Snuffer, but he had the savvy.

After two days of trying, and getting only the cold shoulder, Bug-Eye was astonished by a command from Snuffer. He, Bug-Eye, was told with a snort and a wheeze to get out there a quarter-mile away and act as sentinel in the moonlight!

This was a job usually handed to the nondescripts, the spiritless ones. Bug-Eye went right on grazing, ignoring such an insult.

Ka-whamm! Two heavy hoofs struck him squarely in the side, throwing him from his feet. He landed heavily on the wounded side of his rump, and scrambled up, squealing unheroically. Giraffes are not fighters except in defense of their own lives or their young. Bug-Eye never gave a

thought to disputing Snuffer further. He limped out to the sentinel post, and from that moment it never crossed his rather simple mind to dispute the commands of the moth-eaten oldster.

But live and learn. Though the young giraffe did not realize the fact as yet, the insignificant, drab-colored females, with their ambling, loose-jointed progeny at their sides, were the real rulers of the giraffe herd. They decided which old fellow they would follow and obey. Young ones, pretenders, simply were left to whistle and talk to themselves.

They got over that immediately. Giraffes are such gregarious animals that when one is left alone, and cannot find another herd to join, it sickens, stops grazing, and dies.

Bug-Eye was filled with the zest of life. The herd had diminished, but his own self-esteem gradually mounted. He took pride now in the last inches of his growth, which allowed him to reach tender morsels on the trees which were out of reach even of Snuffer.

He mated again, and when his fifth year of life began there were six awkward little ones of his, following their placid mothers over the plateau. Only two males besides Snuffer and himself had survived; and both the others were considerably smaller. Bug-Eye's time was coming; and in the end it was through a sort of desperate gallantry that he achieved the highest rank in the herd.

IT was only through great craft in stalking, plus some luck, that a man on horseback could slay a giraffe. Some accident similar to that dust storm usually had to help. Of course if the native Ethiopians had hunted with modern flat-trajectory rifles, it would have been a different story. But they did not employ firearms much. A surprise from ambush, a quick spring and sprint, a blow or two from the broadswords—that was the time-honored method, which did not succeed very often for the simple reason that given three or four seconds in which to get under way, any giraffe could outrun any horse.

Lions were a far graver peril. At even the coldest scent of a giraffe herd, tawny Numa's jaws would slaver. Many a lion; too, fell into pitfalls onto sharpened stakes below, simply because he lost caution. Giraffe innards as bait tempted him beyond control.

But where a herd of the living long-neckers was concerned, the lion would go for days and nights without food or water, pursuing, stalking—and probably sooner or later getting a chance to leap and strike with his deadly forepaws.

Snuffer had led ever westward, for months. The depleted band, slowly being rebuilt by a dozen young giraffes of varying ages, had reached the reedy shores of Queen Margherita Lake, when the first real lion disaster occurred—the first fatality in the life-time of Bug-Eye, though there had been plenty lion scares.

A lion and lioness, hunting together, had the unbelievable luck to see this tasty herd, frightened by something real or imagined, come flying straight in their direction as they lay in the thorn bush and reeds a hundred feet from the edge of the lake.

All they had to do was to wait! The wind was blowing toward the tawny pair, who flattened themselves cat-fashion, licking their chops, and waiting . . . waiting . . .

Simultaneous springs! Whistles, squeals of alarm. Thudding hoofs. And here and there striking with that back-breaking downstroke, flashed the great cats, biting into the neck and lifeblood of one victim, only to leave instantly as the crimson spurted to slay another frenzied victim.

Three of the young ones, terrified and running this way and that in senseless fashion, were killed outright. The Snuffer, cornered in the branches of a thicket, turned and struck vainly with his hoofs—which missed the red awfulness of the lion's jaws.

That was all for Snuffer. He went down, screaming.

Bug-Eye had started to run, found himself headed, swerved—and there saw the lioness strike down one of the young giraffes.

Wheeling, Bug-Eye let the long, slinky brute have the entire strength of his hind-quarters! The hoofs went home, striking ear and bloody jaw, cracking bone. . . .

A minute later the triumphant male lion came from his kill, smelled puzzledly at the motionless, stretched-out form of his

mate there on the ground, and then turned, tail lashing. The great roar of anger and sorrow he sent up reached the fleeing giraffe band faintly, spurring them to swifter flight.

Out there, Bug-Eye led, undisputed now. He had killed a lion.

THE END

Iceberg Hunters

BY far the worst menace to Atlantic shipping are the icebergs which drift from Baffin Bay past Newfoundland directly into the Gulf Stream and important shipping lanes. In these waters a small berg lasts only two weeks, a large one about three; but sometimes there are a great many. The average is four hundred dangerous icebergs a year. In 1912, when the Titanic crashed into one, not less than 1,000 bergs were counted south of Newfoundland. That was the worst year so far. In 1924 only eleven bergs were counted, and in 1933 there were none at all.

After the Titanic disaster with its loss of 1,500 lives, fourteen nations combined to support an International Ice Patrol, the job of berg hunting being turned over to the U. S. Coast Guard. Each February a small boat goes north to investigate ice conditions. Later two regular cutters take over the ice patrol in spells of fifteen days each. These are fast two hundred and fifty-foot steel cutters, electrically driven, and make sixteen knots. A third is kept in harbor for emergencies.

At six in the morning the first broadcast is sent out, giving the position of the cutter and of all icebergs known, beginning with those farthest south—including their speed, which is generally about half a knot per hour. During the day inquiries pour in from near-by ships—as many as twenty or thirty if the weather is foggy. During the summer in this region there is fog about half the time. It is the job of the cutter on duty to steer these ships around the bergs. The same applies to derelicts, if any, and to ships not on their regular tracks. Many tourists sail to Europe and back without realizing that their ship has followed a clearly defined track and returned by another sixty miles to the north. To get off the track is a serious break in the rules.

The actual charting of the bergs, and incidentally of all ships within four hundred miles, is the work of a government oceanographer who stays on duty from April to June, moving from one cutter to the next in a small boat. He is supposed to keep track of each berg till it melts to about the size of a packing box. Experiments have been made to blow up the bergs, but there is not enough TNT in America to do the job. The Coast Guard has taken pride in the fact that no lives have been lost here because of ice since 1912. As a further reminder, a memorial service is held each April 14 on the cutter in service, usually on the site of the Titanic disaster.

—J. W. Holden.

The Men Who Make The Argosy

THE AUTHOR OF "THE BROTHERS"

BORN on a very hot day (family gossip is the basis for this report) at the old family *caserne*, "Red Gables," Riverdale-on-the-Hudson, July 9th, 1903. Received, often forcibly, his first inklings of the demands of intellectual life at the Hill School, Pottstown, Pa., and at Horace Mann School, Riverdale-on-the-Hudson. The inklings, at this and other schools, usually lasted

throughout the football season, at least—and even sometimes through the baseball season. With the eagerness born of youth and a badly set collarbone, which spelled no more football, I climbed over the side of my first ship at Conneaut, Ohio; the *James A. Farrell*, she was, and that was in April, 1920. The subject here reached magnificent heights, rising in a single season from ordinary seaman to deck watchman. Then, overcome by this glory, he retired to deep-water. There served on the *McKeesport*, *Cosmopolitan*

Line, and on the *Steel Engineer*, *Isthmian* Line, running to England, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, the Azores—and into any "pub" with open doors.

At the Plaza de Toros in Barcelona, I saw those two *magnificos*, the bullfighters Juan Belmonte and Joselito. Later I saw the return of the few—the very few—survivors of the massacre of General Sylvestre's column at Annual, Spanish Morocco, by that perfect gentleman, Abd-el-Krim.

Feeling tremors of even greater glory (the subject had by this time climbed to the dizzy reaches of able-bodied seamanship, and he will gladly credit his success to any correspondence school the reader wishes to name), he turned his back upon the Pillars of Hercules, the Rambla, the Café Verdi, Maxim's and the

Hotel Vesuve. Somehow still an able-bodied sailor, the subject shoved off for the Caribbean, Panama, the West Coast, and the Far Pacific Islands on the *S.S. Steel Seafarer*. After an accident at sea, I spent a couple of months in Marine Hospital Number Five; repaired, I came home—still an A. B.

Late in the fall of 1922, in New York, I

made the motions of swallowing the anchor (with one small sideslip towards the *Western World*, around Christmas time). There followed various shore jobs here and there: knocker and puddler in an open hearth foundry, shipyard worker (rigging and rivet ducking—not mine, anybody's), rodman with a transit gang, pick-and-shovel-it, railroad round-house mechanic, railroad policeman (with an excellent equipment consisting of a tin shield and a light wooden club, plus "powers of persuasion" and of "rapid departure").

Next, a job on the local news staff of the *New York Times*, which I managed to keep for two and a half years. Left to join the gold boomers in Florida; never did like cold winters anyway. Got away from there before the roof blew off, and came North by various stages, ragged and otherwise.

More newspaper work in the vicinity of New York; then a crack at publicity, which I gave up for two things, marriage and freelance writing. In my first year I nearly starved; I became the father of a daughter; I wrote my first novel; and I acquired a fine collection of publishers' rejection slips.

Since then I've written three other novels; lived in Bermuda, Connecticut, Southern France, Haiti, Jamaica—Oh, well, these are the days! *sic, sic.* —Robert Carse.





Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



SOME FACTS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO "TEXAS SHALL BE FREE!"

IT may be asked who was responsible for the massacre of the Texans held prisoners at Goliad. The alleged signed articles of capitulation, on terms that insured final liberty, have not endured, unless they are buried somewhere in Mexican archives; Colonel Fannin's copy was of course destroyed among his other effects.

No matter what the terms, Santa Anna violated the usages of war. He claimed that General Urrea did not cite the terms to him; Urrea claimed that the surrender was at discretion. Yet by Mexican statements, Urrea asked clemency for the prisoners. "The response of Santa Anna to the recommendation of Señor de Urrea was a strong reproach showing displeasure, and at the same time bidding him not to tarnish his triumphs with ill-conceived compassion." Three positive orders, it is said, were sent General Portilla, commanding at Goliad, before he obeyed. Even then he delegated the job to a subordinate. Santa Anna based his order on a Mexican government decree of December, 1835, declaring that armed foreigners landing in the Republic should be treated as pirates. Fannin's command were mainly citizens of the United States.

Three hundred and seventy-one men marched to slaughter. Twenty-seven escaped by flight. The bodies of the slain were stripped and heaped on brush fires. In early June, Texans arriving at Goliad gathered the unconsumed bones and flesh, still lying on the ground, and buried all in pits. No markers were erected, however.

The Mexican force at San Jacinto is variously put at eleven to fourteen hundred; the Texans were about seven hundred and eighty. Houston reports the Mexican loss at six hundred and thirty killed, two hundred and eight wounded, seven hundred and thirty captured, apparently including the wounded with the prisoners. About forty Mexicans escaped from the field.

But just what the hell anybody actually *knows* is beyond reckoning.

H. BEDFORD-JONES.

HAVE you read "Instead of Guns," by Walter Clare Martin, in this issue of ARGOSY? The author of this unusual story of hunting big game with

bow and arrow is himself an expert archer. He is said to be the only white man known to have brought down a flying eagle with an arrow. In our opinion, that's real achievement.

"GIVE us the dope!" cries

"W. N. J."

In the issue of Nov. 2, Lucius J. Hicks asks for "background." I agree with him. Give us the dope on George Bruce's "The Black Ace." There must be some facts that gave the author the idea for his story. Ethiopia holds the center of the stage at present, you know.

I have read your magazine for seven years, and I like especially the many different types of stories it contains. The story that started me was "The Lost Anthill Mine."

Carry on with "Men of Daring," and those small fact items that used to be on the contents page as "Other Features."

I'm particularly fond of serials.

Lawton, Okla.

AN old ballad, sung by

JOHN BELLAMY

In 1878-79 I was in southern California, and while there was joined by another young man from eastern Massachusetts (his home was not far from Gloucester). He recited the following ditty of incidents in the life of *Tom Tupper*. I have related it many times, but do not recall a breath of suspicion of untruthfulness from anyone who listened.

If Mr. Wetjen, who wrote "Nothing But the Truth," was familiar with it, it seems strange he did not include it in his tale of the seas. For a tale which has actually crossed the continent and stood the test of truth for over half a century would have helped the title to his article. Here it is:

In naval action once engaged

We fired away like fun,

With a round of grape and canister shot

We slaughtered every one.

And after the fight we mustered,

And a stranger mustered, too;

For although he was on board of the brig

He was not one of the crew.

"Hullo," says the captain, "how can this be?
A stranger is on board."

And there he stood and scratched his head,

And no one uttered a word—

Until an old tar who was standing by;

Says he, "There's no denying

From the bow gun of the enemy's ship

I saw that lubber come flying."

We christened him in a tub of grog;

Tom Tupper we named him.

He drank all the grog that he could get,

And not a sailor blamed him.

He ate more beef than all the crew

Until on one fine day

We rammed him home in our own bow gun

And fired the lubber away.

And after cruising many a year

I took a cruise in a bark.

And while becalmed upon the line

We caught a monstrous shark.

Within the shark there was a brig—

With provisions she was stored—

And amongst the beef that bloody old thief,

Tom Tupper, was on board!

He cleared the decks, and lockers too,

Of everything he saw;

It took more beef than all the crew

To ease his hungry maw.

For fear that we would famished be

We hauled him out on deck,

And overboard we slung poor Tom

With a grindstone round his neck.

And after cruising many a year

I thought to cruise no more;

And having saved a little gold,

I thought I'd stay ashore.

One day while crossing London Bridge

Among the fishers' wives,

Behind a fence I spied poor Tom,

Grinding scissors and knives.

"Hullo," says I. "How can this be?"

I thought you fast asleep

With a carpenter's grindstone round your neck

Moored in the ocean deep."

Says he, "Not liking much my berth,

And feeling inclined to roam,

I slipped my cable and took a passage

On board the grindstone, home."

Dorchester, Mass.

"HOW does Elston do it?" queries

(MISS) DOROTHY FLOOD

This isn't a contest letter, even though it is a rave about a certain story—or series of stories, for I mean the *Major Eagle* series, by Allan Vaughan Elston. They've got me going! How does he do it? Most other mysteries are so mys-

terious they are obvious, while his are so obvious they are mysterious.

Gosh! He's got suspense, logic, continuity, and above all, good, clever ideas and an extremely interesting way of putting them over.

Oh, and will you please tell him for me (you'd think I was someone important, wouldn't you?) that I hope he continues his way of ending his stories. That simple sentence or statement, "I am an Indian," seems to me the mark of a master. Elston needs no dénouement, no anticlimax, that answers everything.

And, mark you—this is from one who before never gave a hootin'ell for Elston stories—one who, when he had read them, forgot them.

Seriously, I find that somehow I can't pick a favorite story—and one isn't allowed two, is one? I read and enjoy all of them—and may the ARGOSY continue to carry the first-class, unspoiled cargo it has had since I started to read it thirteen years ago, when I was only six.

Cascade, Mont.

ARGOSY even supplies factual proof, thinks

WILFRED ZOTZMAN

I think that Stookie Allen's feature, "Men of Daring," is the best thing you have published this year. After reading the adventurous tales contained in ARGOSY it would not be hard to doubt the possibility of such things if it were not for "Men of Daring," which proves that adventures equal to those contained in fiction printed in ARGOSY often do happen in real life.

Keep up the stories by Mason, Challis, McCulley.

Yellow Grass, Sask., Can.

"BBLACK ACE," a surprise to

V. CHITTICK

I am a college student—which is neither here nor there—but I am a veteran ARGOSY reader, having read it prior even to my high school days.

ARGOSY is an interesting magazine, even during its "off issues," for it can boast an assortment of stories which, happily, are not restricted to a single type. I have read countless stories in it by your well-known writers, stories which I thoroughly enjoyed and which enthralled me completely during the reading, but to George Bruce I take off my hat. In writing "Black Ace" he wrote the sort of story I never expected to read anywhere—ever. A Negro hero is not so uncommon in stories, but a *Jefferson Rolfe* who not once in the thirty-two pages played the clown or acted like a pompous ass—well, surely the Age of Miracles is not over!

The story was good, the characters were fine, and the description, particularly that of the Ethiopian ceremony, was all that could be asked for.

And with superb technique Bruce gave us just the right amount of throat-tightening interest.

All in all, I would say that he handled this *most unusual story* like a master, and therefore I rate his story, "Black Ace," as unquestionably the "tops." It gets my vote as the best story. New York, N. Y.

WORDS of praise from a Texan,

GEO. B. ADAMS

Naturally, the ARGOSY story that has the most appeal to me is the serial, "Bowie Knife," for the narrative deals with my native state and the history thereof. The story clearly depicts the life-in-the-raw manner of living, etc., of that by-gone era; also, the historical facts are truly narrated. Furthermore, mention is made of the famous scout, David Crockett, who, to me, seems almost an acquaintance, as two of his descendants, Ashley W. Crockett and David C. Crockett, have lived in this city. Having known both men personally, I have often heard them talk of their famous kinsman.

As for another famous character of the Texas Revolution, take Ben Milans. Several of his direct descendants also live in Glen Rose, and are members of the city's foremost families.

Speaking of the San Saba silver mines, I visited that section of the Southwest a short time ago on a deer hunt, and I found there numbers of abandoned shafts, tunnels and the like, some of which are reputed to date as far back as the days of the Spanish explorer, Coronado.

The foregoing explanation, and various other reasons too numerous to mention, make "Bowie Knife" a gripping story to me.

Glen Rose, Tex.

SHE doesn't like air stories, yet reads 'em!—

MABEL B. RESSEGGER

I'm just a "lunger" chasing the cure, and don't expect to see this in print or to win a prize. I never won a prize in my life.

I have been reading ARGOSY for twenty years and I like the type of stories it contains better than those in any other magazine. I have never liked the air stories of the war variety, nor do I like the fantastic type; but I do wish to present Mr. George Bruce with an orchid for his story, "Black Ace." If there ever was a hero it was Jeff Rolfe.—Another orchid to Eustace L. Adams for his "Wings of Treachery." It had so much realism I was with "Stu" Holt over every foot of his power dive, and from that time on through both installments. "Stu" sure was one hard-boiled egg—ten-minute variety.

My favorite authors are H. Bedford-Jones, F. V. W. Mason and Allan Vaughan Elston.

Hopemont, W. Va.

A SCHOOL superintendent is pleased—and disappointed:

THOMAS R. LAWRENCE

It takes a great story to make me break my silence, but in George Bruce's "Flying Circus" you have such a story. I have read a number of his yarns, including "Black Ace," which you recently published, and although I have always recognized in him a competent writer, none of his previous stories have quite reached the level of this one.

I'm disappointed, too. Although I've only finished the first installment, I can plainly see already that six parts are going to be entirely too few. Why can't it go on and on?

Clifford High School, Clifford, Mich.

WHAT 1917 brought to:

MRS. MARVIN FISHBACK

Four things of note happened in 1917 for me: first, a baby girl; second, a new house; third, a new Ford car; fourth, ARGOSY.

I have watched the progress of all, during the years. Baby girl has grown, and now disputes possession of ARGOSY with her mother. The new house has lost a few shingles and needs a coat of paint. The Ford car went to the junk pile long ago. But good old ARGOSY just sails on and on, getting better from year to year.

What story do I like best? Well, it's hard to choose from so many good ones. Just now I am very much interested in "Off-Side!" by Judson P. Philips. It has many things of interest to recommend it to the average reader, but to me it has two items of special interest. That is, sports and politics.

There isn't a dull line in the story. Graphic description, where you can almost see the flashing eyes, hear panting breath, and feel the aches and pains of the characters. Climaxes are not preceded by tiresome explanation. I like a story wherein the author's pen has free-wheeling. And if Part Three turns out to be as good as One and Two, I unhesitatingly cast my vote for "Off-Side!" as the best story since June 1st.

La Belle, Mo.

A NATURAL, says:

BRIAN PARKER

I think that "Wings of Treachery," beginning in the issue of October 26th, is the best story since June 1st. It reveals a man who lives in the spirit of adventure. I like the story for its clean, vigorous manhood, its spirit of lively adventure, its loyal faith, its quick, tense drama, and the naturalness of its plot.

Reading, Pa.



Looking Ahead!

ONCE—FOR A THOUSAND

Another tale about *Smooth Kyle*, the likable, believable, two-fisted hero of "Midnight Taxi." *Smooth* now takes up the trail of a counterfeit ring in New York—and finds that a gun is as necessary as quick wits, or inside knowledge of the gambling racket.—But he's the same hard guy, the same tough Federal Op., as ever.—Seven nerve-tingling parts by

BORDEN CHASE

SLATED TO DIE

A magnificently thrilling mystery by the mystery writer of the hour, the man whose popularity has increased by leaps and bounds during the past year, and who is Hollywood's latest, greatest "find" (ARGOSY published his stories for years before the Hollywood "seers" took him up). A novelette by

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

A-HUNTING WE WILL GO

What was the War coming to—with officers and men stopping to hunt boars at Château-Thierry?—A story which supplies some of the biggest laughs—and more of them, too—you'll be likely to have during the coming year. A novelette by

THEODORE FREDENBURGH

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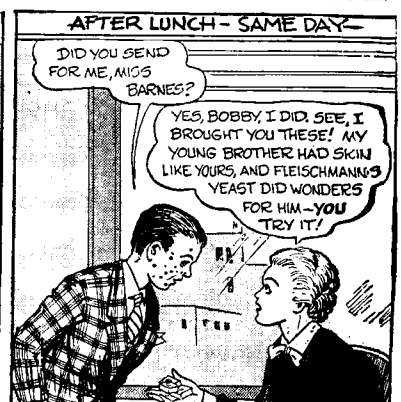
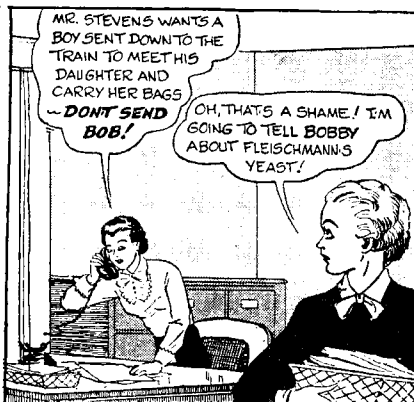
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6A—4

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FAMOUS AVIATORS TELL WHY CAMELS ARE Milder



Lieutenant Commander Frank Hawks, U. S. N. R. (left), holder of 214 speed records and the Harmon Trophy, comments: "As the athletes say, Camels are so mild they don't get the wind. And I've found they never upset my nerves. Camel must use choicer tobaccos."

"Camels don't get your Wind" Athletes say



"I smoke Camels all I want," says Colonel Roscoe Turner (right). "I enjoy Camels more. Because of their mildness they never tire my taste. And after smoking a Camel, I get a 'refill' in energy—a new feeling of vim and well-being."

"Get a Lift with a Camel"

"Camels refresh me so when I'm fatigued," says Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith (above), who made the record-breaking transpacific flight. "And they are so mild that I can smoke any number of Camels without throwing my nerves off key."

"They Never Tire Your Taste"



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